QAA

# University of Wales, Lampeter

May 2007

Institutional review

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# Preface

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) exists to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education (HE) qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of HE.

To do this QAA carries out reviews of individual HE institutions (universities and colleges of HE). In Wales this process is known as institutional review. QAA operates similar but separate processes in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

## The purpose of institutional review

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

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

## Judgements

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

- the **confidence** that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards
- the **reliance** that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the institution publishes, and about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards.

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

## Nationally agreed standards

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

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

## The review process

Institutional reviews are carried out by teams of academics who review the way in which institutions oversee their academic quality and standards. Because they are evaluating their equals, the process is called 'peer review'.

The main elements of institutional review are:

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

## The evidence for the review

In order to obtain the evidence for its judgement, the review team carries out a number of activities, including:

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

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

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

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# Summary

## Introduction

A team of reviewers from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of Wales, Lampeter (UWL) from 21 to 25 May 2007 to carry out an institutional review. The purpose of the review was to provide public information on the quality of the opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards that the institution offers.

To arrive at its conclusions the review team spoke to members of staff throughout UWL and to student representatives. It also read a wide range of documents relating to the way the institution manages the academic aspects of its provision.

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

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

## Outcome of the review

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

- limited confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the University's present and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and of the academic standards of its awards.

## Features of good practice

The review team identified the following areas as being good practice:

- effective and enthusiastic implementation of widening participation initiatives
- a comprehensive range of centrally provided student support.

## Recommendations for action

The review team also recommends that UWL should consider further action in a number of areas in order to ensure that the academic quality of programmes and the standards of the awards that it offers are maintained.
It is essential for UWL to:

- establish deliberative structures and management systems that ensure effective and consistent institutional oversight and management of quality and standards for its programmes and awards.

The review team advises UWL to:

- ensure that intended learning outcomes and assessments in module descriptors are appropriate to the level or levels at which the module is specified
- establish and implement institutional systems that ensure timely and effective provision of feedback to students on their assessed work
- revise the structure of external examiner reports so as to establish minimum expectations in line with the *Code of practice for academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA
- enable students to make module choices that provide balanced and realistic workloads and meet the requirements of the awards for which they are registered.

It would be desirable for UWL to:

- review the ways in which external assessors are informed of their role in programme approval and clarify their reporting requirements.

## National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings the review team also investigated the use made by UWL of the Academic Infrastructure which QAA has developed on behalf of the whole of UK higher education.

The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points that help to define both good practice and academic standards. The findings of the review suggest that the University has further work to do in meeting some of the expectations of the *Code of practice*.

## Published information

The institutional review process includes a check on the reliability of the information set published by institutions in the format recommended in the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales' document, *Teaching Quality Information (TQI) Requirements for Higher Education in Wales (HEFCW W04/05HE)*. At the time of the review UWL was alert to the requirements set out in *HEFCW W04/05HE* and was fulfilling its responsibilities in this regard. The University is meeting the requirements with regard to the coverage, accuracy, reliability and frankness of information that it provides.

# Main report

# Main report

## Introduction

1 An institutional review of the University of Wales, Lampeter (UWL or the University) was undertaken from 21 to 25 May 2007. The purpose of the review was to provide public information on the quality and standards of the University's programmes of study which lead to academic awards of the University of Wales.

2 The review was carried out using a process developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in partnership with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). For institutions in Wales it replaces the previous process of continuation audit, undertaken by QAA at the request of Universities UK (UUK) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP (now GuildHE)). Institutional review also replaces assessments and engagements relating to the quality and standards of provision at subject level. The former were undertaken by HEFCW and the latter were undertaken by QAA on behalf of HEFCW as part of HEFCW's statutory responsibility for assessing the quality of education that it funds.

3 The review checked the effectiveness of UWL's procedures for establishing and maintaining the standards of academic awards from the University of Wales (federal University or UW), for reviewing and enhancing the quality of programmes of study leading to those awards and for publishing reliable information. The scope of the review encompassed all of UWL's provision and collaborative arrangements leading to UW awards.

# Section 1: Introduction: University of Wales, Lampeter

## The institution and its mission

4 UWL was founded in 1822 by Bishop Burgess as St David's College. It remained an independent institution awarding its own degrees by Royal Charter, until it joined the federal University of Wales in 1972; it then awarded degrees of that University as St David's University College. The current title, University of Wales, Lampeter, was adopted in 1996. It is one of the smaller universities in Europe with a campus in the centre of the town.

5 Following the QAA review of the federal University in 2004, responsibility for assurance of quality and standards of academic awards was devolved by UW to its constituent institutions provided that they possess, in their own right, the appropriate degree awarding powers. By virtue of its own degree awarding powers, UWL was exempted from this process and has full delegated authority for the maintenance of the quality and standards of the University of Wales degree.

6 During the academic year 2006-07, there were approximately 2,340 students enrolled on UWL programmes. Of these, some 77 per cent were undergraduate students, 17 per cent were taught postgraduates and 6 per cent research postgraduates. Home/European Union students included approximately 85 per cent of the intake. There were some 75 undergraduate students (nearly all full-time) on UWL programmes at Coleg Powys and Coleg Morgannwg. Approximately half of all students enrolled on UWL programmes were part-time, nearly all of whom were distance-learning students, either directly or through partners (see below, paragraph 137).

7 The current Vice-Chancellor (VC) was appointed in 2003. Since his appointment UWL's academic and management structure was modified at the start of the academic session 2004-05. It now comprises one School (Humanities and Social Sciences) with 10 academic departments.

8 The self-evaluation document (SED) emphasised that UWL continues the ethos of a liberal education started by its founder and, as such, its portfolio of courses is mainly in arts, humanities and social sciences, with some provision in information technology (IT) and management.

9 The UWL vision, as expressed in its current Strategic Plan, 'is to be recognised as Britain's foremost liberal arts university by offering: strong academic traditions; an enterprising and dynamic spirit; an education for life; a supportive and caring community; and an enriching and beautiful environment'. UWL is currently reviewing its Strategic Plan but the review team was told that it would not change substantially.

10 According to the SED, the main strategic aims of UWL are:

- to enhance the student experience through improvements in the delivery of services and through increased flexibility in teaching
- to provide a supportive and satisfying environment for staff
- to improve the University's performance in research
- to increase the contribution which the University makes to the economic development of Wales
- to increase the number and range of the University's academic partnerships
- through growth in student numbers, the development of new sources of income and increased efficiency, to operate within the resources available to the University and to generate a sufficient surplus to invest in the University's development.

## Collaborative provision

11 The SED identified substantial expansion of collaborative provision as one of the significant recent developments since the previous QAA audit, citing growing student demand as the reason. The main Departments involved are: Theology and Religious Studies, through its Open Learning Theology and Religious Studies (24 partner institutions) and its postgraduate partnerships (18 partner institutions); and Management and IT through its partnerships with the College of Technology, London, Stratford College, London, and Coleg Powys. This expansion led UWL to develop a Quality Manual for Collaborative Arrangements (QMCA) to ensure that quality assurance systems are fully comparable with those for campus-based courses (see below, paragraphs 29, and 143).

## Background information

12 The published information available for this review included:

- information on the UWL website
- the previous QAA quality audit report, published in 1999
- information on the websites of the following: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), Higher Education and Research Opportunities in the UK (HERO) and HEFCW.

13 In addition, the review team received:

- an unpublished report relating to a subject review in Business and Management and Computing conducted in 2002 (part of HEFCW/QAA pan-Wales developmental engagements. It was agreed that the reports would be confidential)
- the unpublished report for the review of research degree programmes conducted in 2006 by QAA on behalf of HEFCW
- an institutional SED
- the institutional progress report (2004) and QAA's response.

14 During its visit, the review team was given access to UWL's intranet, to secure areas of departmental websites and a range of internal documents.

## The review process

15 QAA conducted a preliminary visit in September 2006 to discuss operational aspects of the review. QAA received the SED in February 2007.

16 The review team visited the institution on 16 to 18 April 2006 for the purpose of exploring with the VC, senior members of staff and student representatives matters relating to the management of quality and standards

raised by the SED or other documentation provided for the team. During this briefing visit the team signalled a number of themes for the review visit, including thematic trails in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology and collaborative provision. A programme of meetings was developed, which was agreed with UWL.

17 At the preliminary meeting for the review, the students of UWL were invited, through their representatives, to submit a separate document, the student written submission (SWS) expressing views on the student experience at UWL, and identifying any matters of concern or commendation about the quality of programmes and the standard of awards. The student representatives decided that they would provide a separate submission to the review team, and submitted a SWS in February 2007.

18 The review visit took place from 21 to 25 May 2007 and involved further meetings with staff and students of UWL. The review team comprised Dr C Alder, Mr P Bassett, Mr A Hunt, Mrs J Lyttle, and Mr S Murphy, review secretary. The review was coordinated for QAA by Dr D Gale, Assistant Director.

## Developments since the previous academic quality review

19 The previous QAA quality audit report was conducted some eight years previously in 1999. The report highlighted a number of commendable activities and processes, including those related to:

- the effectiveness of the relationship between UWL and franchise partners
- the development and maintenance of an effective personal tutor system
- its appraisal system for academic and related staff
- the effectiveness of staff:student consultative committees and the central system for monitoring and responding to issues raised
- the systems for auditing University and departmental promotional literature.

20 The report identified the necessity of monitoring the effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements within two collaborative partnerships. UWL used this experience to inform the processes and procedures applicable to other partners. Moreover, the report invited UWL to consider the advisability of the extension of its appraisal system (see below, paragraph 103); the provision of systematic staff development for research students engaged in teaching (see below, paragraphs 105 and 107); and the improvement of its staff development provision (see below, paragraph 106). The SED stated that UWL was in the process of addressing some of these issues and the team saw evidence of progress on a number of fronts. The report also noted five issues of lesser concern.

21 As well as growth in collaborative activities, the SED identified several other significant recent developments including expansion in part-time and distance-learning numbers (see below, paragraphs 112 and 137); progress with the national pay framework and a job evaluation scheme (see below, paragraphs 100 and 103); and the introduction of an annual Student Satisfaction Survey (see below, paragraph 88).

22 Since the previous audit there have been internally driven changes to structures and procedures. More significantly, the QAA review of UW has occasioned a review of UWL's own Charter and Statutes and of the consequent changes to its own quality assurance processes, a review which is still ongoing.

23 The report of the QAA developmental engagement in 2002 was circulated to all departments for consideration. The team saw evidence that the report's recommendations were being addressed.

24 The QAA review of research degree provision (RDP) at UWL (2006) drew attention to three areas: ensuring the institutional processes at the Research Institute and departmental level are clear and accessible to staff and students; reviewing the information available to research students to ensure it is clear and consistently applied; and providing generic skills training,

training needs analysis and professional development planning (PDP) mechanisms. The report was considered at the Senate Executive Board (SEB) and circulated to departments for action and response. The review team was informed that the Research Committee and the Registry were addressing the issues raised and saw evidence confirming this was the case (see below, paragraphs 124 and 156).

25 The review team noted the prompt response to the RDP report, but was concerned that a number of issues raised by the previous audit had not been addressed at institutional level in a timely manner. These issues are referred to elsewhere in this report (see below, paragraphs 103 and 105 to 107).

## Section 2: The review investigations: institutional processes

### The institution's view as expressed in the SED

26 The Senate is the academic authority of UWL. This responsibility is discharged through the delegation of certain functions to a number of committees and individuals. The VC is the chief administrative and executive officer of UWL and chairs the Senate, as well as being an ex officio member of all committees of the institution. The SEB, under the chairmanship of the VC, has responsibility for quality assurance functions.

### The institution's framework for managing quality and standards, including collaborative provision

27 Although UWL has degree awarding authority in its own right, it has awarded degrees of the federal University and operated within its 'Enabling Regulations' for a number of years. However, following the QAA review of the federal University in 2004, the latter has devolved responsibility for quality assurance to its institutions and UWL is in the process of amending its own Charter and Statutes to reflect this new relationship. UWL took the decision to continue operating the University of Wales regulations when devolution of authority came into effect from August 2006 'until such time as the Regulations are amended by the SEB'. The SED states that 'there is no immediate need for a major revision of the academic regulations which were in most respects operating satisfactorily prior to the change in structures. Thus, the regulations will be changed progressively, as each area which they cover is reviewed'. In view of this QAA institutional review of UWL, the review team considered that UWL should undertake and complete this review as soon as possible to ensure it has a set of policies and procedures in place to support effective institutional oversight and management of quality and standards for its programmes and awards.

28 The VC, Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC), Registrar and Secretary, and the Dean are members of the SEB and the Senior Management Team (SMT), and they provide liaison between the two committees and ensure their responsibilities are kept separate. SMT is not recognised within its terms of reference as having responsibility for monitoring quality assurance but is described in the SED as having 'a clear managerial interest in ensuring that the University's procedures and mechanisms are operating effectively. Major policy issues of a QA [quality assurance] nature are therefore often discussed at this body before they are presented to the SEB and/or the Heads of Departments for formal decisions and action'.

29 The University has up-dated, in December 2006 and February 2007 respectively, its Quality Assurance and Learning Manual (QALM) and the Quality Manual for Collaborative Arrangements (QMCA). These documents, approved by the SEB, make clear the similarity of quality assurance requirements for internal and collaborative provision. The SED stated that, 'In most instances, the University does comply with the precepts and advice in the *Code of Practice'* and both documents have been informed by *The framework for higher education qualifications in*

*England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), and the *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales* (CQFW). Although both quality manuals had been developed by reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, the review team was provided with no evidence to demonstrate how UWL had considered the purpose and intentions of the elements of the *Code*, reflected on their impact on institutional practice, and taken any necessary measures to ensure that appropriate changes had been made to reflect guidance provided by the *Code* (see also below, paragraphs 49, 68, 71, 75 and 142).

30 During the academic year 2004-05, UWL modified its academic structure from three schools to 10 academic departments within one School of Humanities and Social Sciences. This restructuring was undertaken to enable a greater degree of responsibility for the academic disciplines. The new School is led by a Head of School (or Dean). Departments vary considerably in size with full-time staff numbers falling to as low as three.

31 Heads of department are responsible for the line management of staff, the quality assurance of programmes, financial management and the committee structures within their departments. There is no requirement for each department to adopt a common committee structure and arrangements for committees vary between the departments: the larger departments having more committees with a specific remit than the smaller departments. Each head of department holds regular departmental meetings and the minutes of these meetings remain within the department as they are not required by the University committees, nor by the monthly Heads of Department Meeting that is chaired by the Dean. Similarly, the Heads of Department Meeting minutes are not required to be reported to the SEB, where heads of department are present, although they are received, for information, by SMT. The review team, having read the minutes, found little evidence to indicate the ways in which information is communicated between the centre and the departments; other than through informal processes, and the inclusion of the heads of department on the SEB. Minutes of the SEB and monthly Heads of Department Meeting read by the team rarely indicated receipt of information from departments; however, the Heads of Department meeting is also identified by staff as important for the dissemination of good practice emanating from departments. The team having considered the reporting mechanisms between the University and departmental committees concluded that this arrangement may comprise the institutions ability to provide institutional oversight and management of quality and standards for its programmes and awards.

32 Responsibility for the implementation of quality assurance procedures, including collaborative provision, resides with the academic departments and is monitored by SEB. The review team considered that SEB could not discharge its responsibility and maintain effective and consistent oversight of the completeness of the quality procedures when it receives only composite reports and summary information on reviews and course approvals. The team found that reports provided to the SEB for Course Approval Panels were not comprehensive in their coverage of the requirements as detailed in the QALM. Moreover, there is no indication within the minutes of the SEB that documentation introduced for the processes outlined within the quality manuals, and approved by SEB, have been mapped against the QAA's Academic Infrastructure. This lack of evidence of the effective discharge of SEB's responsibilities lead the team to consider it essential that the University puts mechanisms in place for the effective management of quality and standards (see below, paragraphs 39, 64 and 65, 140 and 141).

## The institution's intentions for the enhancement of quality and standards

33 Although the SED did not make explicit reference to enhancement, recent developments in the approval of the QALM and the QMCA are

viewed by the senior managers as a move towards enhancement and the evaluation of the impact of these documents will identify specific actions for the promotion of enhancement. UWL made clear in QALM its view that 'the design of programmes is essentially a creative activity involving the interaction of staff and students. It, therefore, wishes to ensure that its approval and review procedures do not stifle innovation and creativity'. As these documents are very recent introductions the review team did not have sufficient evidence available to evaluate their impact, although they were able to confirm that the procedures outlined in the QALM are understood by staff.

34 UWL has approved a new programme for the development of its teaching staff, the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education, that is being delivered in collaboration with other universities in Wales. This, together with the appointment of a Staff Development Advisor and the formation of an Advisory Group on Professional Development demonstrates a commitment to the development of staff and a means for the promotion of learning and teaching enhancement. UWL has been successful in the next stage of the Higher Education Academy's (HEA's) Benchmarking of e-Learning in UK Higher Education. This is an important development for UWL as they move towards distance and e-learning for the support of their students.

## Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

### Programme approval

35 The recently approved QALM addresses the expectations of the CQFW and subject benchmark statements for procedures associated with programme and module development (also, see above, paragraph 29). Programme specifications have been developed for the majority of programmes, with the requirement for all programmes to have them published by the Autumn 2007.

36 The SEB is responsible for admitting a programme to UWL's portfolio. New programmes are developed within departments using a Synopsis of a Proposal for a New Scheme Approval (SCAP1) form. The SCAP1 once prepared is progressed to the Registrar and Secretary who will refer this to the SMT for initial approval. The SMT's function is to ensure that the new programme fits in with the current development strategy of UWL and that financial and resource issues have been considered. If endorsed at this committee, the SMT will recommend to the SEB that a Course Approval Panel (CAP) be established to examine the new proposal in detail. The SEB is responsible for the CAP and selects a chair from the membership of the SEB, two members of staff and a student representative to serve at the panel. The Registrar and Secretary or his nominee attends all CAP events.

37 Following the acceptance of a proposal by the SEB, the department is responsible for preparing the documentation. The SEB also asks the Registrar and Secretary to seek a report on the proposal from an independent external assessor from another university who is nominated by the Head of Department. The external assessor may be a current or recent external examiner for programmes within the department who is required to submit a report on the documentation to the CAP. The SED emphasised the importance of the role of the external assessor in the CAP event, recognising them as the subject specialist and making clear that 'any misgivings on their part would be highly influential'. To guide the external assessor in producing the report, copies of the relevant sections from the QALM are provided. The external assessor may attend the approval event as a member of the CAP. Following the CAP event, SEB receives the report on the outcomes before approving the programme. Approval of a new programme is indefinite; withdrawal of existing programmes is initiated at departmental level (see below, paragraph 43).

38 A streamlined process operates for the introduction of a new pathway to an existing programme. The documentation is sent to the external assessor for comment and upon receipt, this comment and the documentation

is presented to the SEB for consideration and a decision. For programme modification, the decision whether to establish a CAP or not, is based on the percentage of new modules to be included. New modules may be introduced within the processes described above or through a procedure outlined within the QALM. Departments must approve the new module at their appropriate committee meeting and, once approved, the Head of Department will send the completed module descriptor to the Registrar and Secretary, together with written consent from the external examiner. When the Registrar and Secretary is satisfied that the new module complies with the requirements, he will then inform the SEB. Major changes to existing modules must be agreed at departmental level and do not require the approval of the external examiner before being reported to the SEB. Decisions concerning the withdrawal of modules must also be confirmed at departmental level prior to the Registrar and Secretary being informed of the decision and the date on which the withdrawal will take effect.

39 The review team reviewed a number of CAP reports that had been presented to, and approved by, the SEB. The team found that the reports did not always meet the requirements as set out in the 'Programme approval procedures' detailed in QALM and that responses from external assessors were very variable in providing a comprehensive review. The SED stated that 'Conditions imposed by the CAP must be met before the programme may go ahead and the revised Course Document which the Department produces following the CAP meeting is always shown to the external assessor for approval. It is only then that a proposal is finally introduced'. However, the SEB minutes do not record, in all instances, that the conditions of the CAP were completed to the satisfaction of the external assessor, before the decision was made to approve the programme.

40 The review team saw samples of descriptors for modules offered simultaneously at both higher education levels 2 and 3, a practice common at UWL. The learning outcomes ranged from clearly listed and differentiated outcomes for each level, through to descriptors with only one set of outcomes, to those without clear outcome statements. Coupled with the common use of a single-marking scheme at all levels, the team was concerned that there may be some lack of clarity for students in establishing the standards of performance required for successful study as they progressed through a programme. This view was supported by external examiners expressing concern either about variations between the performance of students studying the same module at different levels or the need to produce differentiated marking criteria. SEB, in its consideration of the External Examiner Working Group notes, has focused particular attention on external examiners' comments that assessment criteria might be developed so that they differentiate between academic levels. In conclusion, the team considered it advisable that UWL ensures that intended learning outcomes and assessments in module descriptors are appropriate to the level or levels at which the module is specified.

41 In summary, the review team was concerned that in connection with programme approval they were unable to find robust and consistent evidence of a confirmation process addressing conditions attached to programme approval and that significant issues might be overlooked. The team was also concerned that the variable quality of contribution from external experts had the potential to put standards and quality at risk. The team considered it essential that the University addresses these matters to ensure the effective management of quality and standards.

**Annual monitoring**

42 Annually, heads of department complete a quality audit checklist which is submitted to the Office of the Registrar and Secretary. The quality audit checklist consists of a number of questions to which a yes or no answer is required; a comment may also be included. This return is not reported to the SEB but any negative responses to the items in the checklist must be discussed by the Registrar and Secretary with the Head of Department.

43 All programmes within a department are monitored triennially, in the Michaelmas Term, a relatively new process which has replaced the requirement for the annual monitoring of programmes, in order to reduce as stated in the SED the 'bureaucratic demands on small departments'. This monitoring process is known as Triennial Review. It is an internal departmental process. The purpose of the Triennial Review process is to ensure that programmes remain current, that the learning outcomes are being attained by the students and, as an outcome, to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to remedy any identified shortcomings. Collaborative programmes associated with the monitored programmes are included within the Triennial Review. External examiners' reports; staff and student feedback; information from former students and their employers; student progress reports; and, the analysis of module evaluation forms, provide the evidence base for this process.

44 The SEB receives a summary of the Triennial Review reports for the previous academic year, which in many instances is some months after the date of completion of the review. Currently, the summary reports for Triennial Reviews undertaken during 2006 are not scheduled to be considered by SEB until its June 2007 meeting. The review team was concerned that given a triennial cycle for programme monitoring, coupled with a delay of some months before the SEB receives a summary report, a cohort of students would have passed through the programmes before the SEB is assured of the quality and standards associated with the programmes that the Triennial Review is designed to address. Moreover, the delay in implementing any action it requires could extend this timeframe further, influencing a further cohort of students. The team was also concerned that, in receiving a summary of reports, the SEB was not able to assure itself that the process was complete and complied with the requirements of the QALM. The team considered that this practice introduced a notable weakness in the institution's management of quality and standards.

**Periodic review**

45 The SEB and SMT have initiated, in 2005, a detailed procedure for the Quinquennial Review of departments to assess the strategic direction, management and operation of the department in teaching/learning, curriculum design and research. The review is undertaken, over two days, by a Departmental Review Panel (DRP). From a review of the DRP reports provided, the review team was able to confirm that this is a comprehensive process that identifies commendable features and makes clear areas for future development. However, a review of the minutes of the SEB provided to the review team showed that they do not contain periodic monitoring reports from SMT for all departments that have been reviewed. The review team concluded that there is evidence to confirm that the SMT and SEB are not complying with their own procedures for the monitoring of action plans arising from the Quinquennial Review of departments process and that they are not able to assure themselves that the departments are progressing the actions required. The team considered it essential that the University ensures effective and consistent institutional oversight in relation to these matters of the management of quality and standards of its programmes and awards.

## External participation in internal review processes

46 External commentary is required for the approval and or modification of modules and programmes. However, it is not a requirement of the process that an external assessor must attend a CAP; it is sufficient for the UWL's regulations that a written commentary has been received. The review team considered that the commentaries submitted by external assessors were variable in their coverage of the requirements for programme approval as detailed in the QALM (see above, paragraph 39) and that external assessors receive limited guidance on the requirements for their role in programme and module approval. They receive the appropriate extracts from the QALM, along with the relevant proposal documents, but their

commentary is not guided by specific criteria. The SED stated that the external assessor must confirm that conditions have been met before a programme is approved by the SEB (see above, paragraph 39).

47 There is no requirement for the involvement of an external assessor for the Triennial Review process but it is a requirement of the process that external examiner reports are considered. The SEB, in consultation with the SMT, appoint the external assessors to serve on the panel for Quinquennial Review of departments.

48 The review team concluded that UWL makes extensive use of external representation to support its quality processes; however, the team considered that it would be desirable that UWL reviews the ways in which external assessors are informed of their role in programme approval and clarify their reporting requirements.

**Assessment practices and procedures**

49 UWL asserted in the SED that its assessment practices 'pay close attention to Section 6 of the *Code of Practice*'. Departments increasingly make use of more varied assessment modes, including oral presentations. Assessment methods are defined in module descriptors, although in the view of the team these definitions are not always clear. External examiners have to approve, in writing, any changes in assessment methods, and the review team found evidence to confirm that this was done. The review team, however, was provided with no evidence to demonstrate that the University's assessment policies and practices had taken into account the section of the *Code*.

50 Assessment regulations, and procedures for the management of assessment, are set out in Academic Regulations and Academic Guidance Notes which were approved by SEB in March 2007. However, they are not yet published either as bound volumes, or on UWL's intranet, and the University will no doubt wish to ensure that these very significant documents are made widely available as soon as possible. Regulations are reviewed periodically, although the resulting process of change can, in the view of the review team, be very slow: for example, the recent introduction of a University standard regulation for the weighting of marks in determining degree classifications entailed a two-year process with its introduction in 2004-05. The team was assured that all departments would be using it in the 2006-07 examining board meetings, by virtue of the fact that marks used by boards would be presented on spreadsheets produced centrally by the Registry.

51 UWL requires the use of its assessment regulations and practices, including double-marking, and its standard assessment criteria, in all collaborative provision; in a few cases where uncertainty has been noted by external examiners, UWL has robustly insisted on this. All collaborative provision is taught and assessed in English, except a programme delivered, in German, at a theological college in Switzerland. Members of the relevant department at UWL, and the external examiner concerned, all read and/or speak German so that they are able to engage fully with the partner institution's staff and students, and mark or moderate assessments. This accords with UWL's policy and the review team was satisfied that this arrangement is secure.

52 All scripts contributing to degree classification must be double-marked, and examination scripts are marked anonymously. In some departments double-marking is a relatively recent practice, at least in a systematic sense, but external examiners have noted its increasing use and effectiveness. External examiners affirm that marking standards are appropriate in an overwhelming majority of cases. Occasional instances of mark inflation have been noted by external examiners in some collaborative provision, and the department concerned noted that it would address this through staff development exercises.

53 UWL has adopted a set of generic marking criteria for undergraduate programmes, and these are published in the Academic Regulations. These criteria are being adopted by departments, and are increasingly, although not yet universally, reproduced in student handbooks instead of earlier departmental

marking criteria. The review team felt that the publication of these standard criteria was helpful to staff and students, not only in UWL but also in its partner institutions, where some external examiners have noted a need to emphasise the use of UWL marking criteria and practice.

54 Viva voce examinations are used for undergraduate and postgraduate awards. At undergraduate level the result of a viva can raise a student's degree classification in borderline cases, although staff met by the review team stated that this measure of performance is applied very sparingly in some departments. One department has produced guidelines for the conduct of vivas at undergraduate level; UWL, however, has not yet done so. The team encourages UWL to make good this deficiency by establishing common rules for the use of viva voce examinations in the interests of equity and rigour.

55 UWL has recently subscribed to plagiarism detection software; according to the SED departments are 'encouraged' to use it and some are already doing so. Students are made aware, in handbooks and induction briefings, of assessment misconduct and the penalties applied. UWL has noted concerns, expressed by some external examiners, that its policy and procedures for dealing with plagiarism should be fully understood and implemented by all departments. The review team considered that the SEB would be better able to monitor the use of UWL's standard procedures, in this and other areas, more effectively if minutes of examining boards were lodged with the Registry (see below, paragraph 64) and formally reported to SEB which was being considered for 2007-08.

56 The SWS indicates that students are generally positive about assessment and understand how their work is marked. Nevertheless, through this and other channels, some students have expressed concerns about the uneven timeliness and quality of feedback, noting that they would find it more helpful if it was returned before the next assignment had to be submitted. The review team was told by the University that marked work should normally be returned to students within three weeks. The team found evidence that indicated late feedback was more widespread and the University recognises that the problem has a wide significance. In some parts of UWL this is thought to be, at least in part, a result of unrealistic expectations; accordingly, one department has responded to students' complaints about late feedback by publishing information indicating return times significantly longer than the three weeks expected by the University. The team was told that SEB would be asked, in June 2007, to consider a proposal for students' work to be returned to them within four weeks, and within three weeks if possible. The team considered this to be an urgent matter and did not consider the proposal to be a progressive or positive response to the problem.

57 Some departments have introduced cover sheets for students' coursework assignments. One department has extended the use of this to partner institutions and set out clear expectations that feedback should guide students to improve their work in future. Students in this department report that they receive helpful feedback. However, in another department, which uses its own cover sheet, staff regard its use as a conversation between markers, and it is not given to students. In that same department, students receive their marked work for 24 hours only, during which time they make a copy before returning the script to the department. The quality of feedback given to students was also very variable: it ranged from detailed and extensive notes and advice to a series of ticks. These differences were particularly noticeable to students studying joint programmes. A recent Quinquennial Review of this department did not appear to detect or address issues of assessment feedback.

58 At least one external examiner has also noted some inadequacies of assessment feedback in a partner institution. Students at collaborative partner institutions also reported variable quality and timeliness of feedback. Open learning students also reported that up

to one-third of their assessment feedback was returned too late to impact on the next assignment submitted. The review team, therefore, considered it advisable that UWL should deal with all these inconsistencies by establishing and implementing institutional policies and systems that ensure timely and effective provision of feedback to students in their assessed work, irrespective of their place and mode of study.

## External examiners and their reports

59 The SED indicated that UWL takes the appointment and reports of external examiners seriously and stated that its arrangements are in line with the *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining*. The regulations and requirements for external examining set out in the QALM broadly reflect this section of the *Code.*

60 Normally, nominations for appointment of external examiners for taught programmes are scrutinised by the Registrar and the VC before approval by SEB. The approval of examiners for research degrees has been delegated by the VC to the Chair of the Research Committee. The University has noted some cases where departments have made repeated use of certain external examiners for research degrees, and have taken firm action to prevent this. Associate Examiners may be appointed for assessment in Welsh, but certification is required to show that they have no contact with students under assessment.

61 Newly appointed external examiners are briefed by departments, and the QALM specifies information to be provided for them. Guidelines for departments are currently being prepared to ensure consistency of departmental approach in the provision of information. Departments are also expected to agree the nature and timing of assessment materials to be sent to them. Even so, some external examiners have reported that they are not given sufficient time to read what is sent to them, or the range of material sent to them was very limited. UWL will no doubt wish to ensure greater consistency in these matters, in order to facilitate the work of its external examiners.

62 A standard form is used as a basis for external examiners' reports. This form, which derives from the UW, includes a series of 'prompts' to external examiners, although the form emphasises that these are 'advisory'. This system is used to encourage examiners to comment on all and any matters of significance rather than constraining their views. However, external examiners' reports read by the review team vary considerably in their scope and level of detail; some are little more than short statements about marking standards, while others use the prompts as a basis for full reports which give constructive and supportive advice for the enhancement of learning and assessment. Moreover, while many examiners respond to the suggestion that they indicate comparability of standards with other UK universities, it is not incumbent upon them, and some do not provide a statement of this kind. In order to derive full comparative benefit from these reports, and to meet the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 4*, the review team advised the University to introduce a standard report form including mandatory sections which will ensure consistent reporting, particularly on the comparability of standards.

63 External examiners' reports are read by the Registrar and the VC, and then sent to the relevant head of department with a note of specific matters to be addressed. The review team found that reports are frequently endorsed 'no response required', although in a few such cases the content of the report was minimal. The team was told that unsatisfactory reports could be remitted back to external examiners for expansion, but this did not appear to be the case in practice.

64 Heads of departments send written responses to external examiners; these responses are also copied to the Registrar and Secretary who sends progress reports to SEB. These reports note that some departmental responses are tardy and require reminders by the Registrar and Secretary. The review team saw evidence that effective action was taken by departments in response to external examiners' reports: for example, one department had

introduced the recording of students' assessed presentations in response to an external examiner's suggestion. Actions in response to external examiners' reports are monitored at meetings of examining boards, and the team was told that responsive action will be made a standing item on the agendas for these boards. However, as minutes of board meetings remain in their respective departments, there is no mechanism by which actions can be monitored at institutional level, and the University should therefore consider whether minutes of examining boards should be deposited with the Registry (see above, paragraph 55). The team considered that this example provides further evidence of lack of institutional oversight.

65 Summary reports on 'general points' raised by external examiners are made by the Registrar and Secretary and sent to SEB. An External Examiner Working Group had been formed in 2006 to consider the 2006 Summary Report, and a number of actions for development of the assessment and external examining processes were proposed (for example, the development of electronic reporting for external examiners). Summary reports to SEB cover issues raised by 'several' examiners; this might explain why a significant matter in relation to student admissions had not been reported to SEB through this or indeed any other mechanism. The review team considered it a matter of concern that issues of this importance were not being brought to the attention of SEB, nor apparently addressed at institutional level.

66 UWL's arrangements for external examining in collaborative provision are the same as in the University. Examiners are appointed by, and report to, UWL, and all provisions of the QALM apply. Where the language of instruction or assessment is other than English or Welsh, external examiners must have the necessary language skills and must also have experience and understanding of UK higher education 'including the role of external examiners'. Only one programme, at a single partner institution, is delivered and assessed in a language other than English or Welsh, and for this programme an external examiner who speaks and reads German has been appointed from another UK university (see above, paragraph 51).

67 In conclusion, UWL acknowledges that its assurance of academic standards relies very heavily on its external examiners and their reports. In view of this, and of its entirely appropriate intention to apply the *Code of practice* in full, the review team considered it advisable that the University revises the structure of external examiners' reports so as to establish minimum expectations in line with the *Code* (see above, paragraph 62). As foregoing paragraphs have noted, significant issues arising from external examiners' reports may not be made known to SEB or senior institutional managers. Institutional monitoring of actions taken in response to external examiners' reports is limited because minutes of department committees and examining boards are not sent to SEB or to the Registry. The team therefore concludes that UWL should take urgent action to ensure its institutional oversight of standards and quality.

## External reference points

68 The Quality Assurance and Learning Manual (QALM) makes direct reference to the Academic Infrastructure, and reflects the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*. References to the Academic Infrastructure are also made in the Quality Manual for Collaborative Arrangements (QMCA) and in departmental handbooks for collaborative provision. The review team was told that these manuals were checked against appropriate sections of the *Code* before approval. However, the team found that in June 2006, SEB received three revised sections of the *Code* and invited heads of departments to report on the extent to which UWL complied with them; however, SEB did not appear to have followed up this exercise. The team was provided with no documentary evidence to demonstrate that consideration had been given to the purpose of these reference points and how the institution had reflected on its own practices.

69 Quinquennial Reviews consider departmental quality assurance procedures, and one departmental review report has noted that these 'show a good engagement with the academic infrastructure', although no details or examples were given. The annual departmental quality audit has check-boxes in which departments are asked to confirm their implementation of elements of the Academic Infrastructure (see above, paragraph 42). However, since this process is not itself audited, the review team considered that it did not enable UWL to take a critical overview of the ways in its departments engage with these external frameworks for the management of quality and standards.

70 UWL's quality assurance procedures take a variable approach to the FHEQ. Reference to the FHEQ is not required in course documents for the validation of new programmes; however, departmental self-evaluations for Quinquennial Reviews are expected to make reference to it, and a recent example seen by the review team did so, albeit rather mechanically, by reproducing the appropriate descriptors. The team considered that a more critical engagement with these descriptors might be of value in future reviews of this kind.

71 One department has included the FHEQ's level descriptors in its handbooks for partner institutions as a key frame of reference for programme development and delivery. The only examples of programme specifications referenced to the FHEQ found by the review team, were amongst this department's collaborative programmes. However, the team saw no evidence of the systematic use of the FHEQ at institutional level, but it considered that such use would be helpful, for example, in the critical differentiation of module specifications and the development of generic assessment criteria (see above, paragraph 40).

72 UWL's procedures for new course development require departments to make reference to subject benchmark statements, published by QAA, when compiling programme documents. Some programme specifications read by the review team were referenced to subject benchmark statements, and Triennial Review reports also demonstrate their use in periodic review. Departments are expected to make use of benchmark statements when preparing self-evaluations for Quinquennial Reviews of departments. In a recent example read by the team the department in question stated that it did not specifically apply these statements but 'through the Departmental Teaching Committee we keep our practices under review in relation to them', and documents showed that this had indeed been the case. The impact of such reviews was not described nor illustrated. However, the team noted another department has been commended by a review panel for its engagement with subject benchmark statements.

73 Programme specifications are routinely prepared for new programmes as part of the validation process. Examples seen by the review team were clear and comprehensive, reflecting QAA guidance. However, programme specifications are not yet available for some programmes already in approval. In 2005-06 the University found that four departments had not completed this task; they were then asked to put these documents in place by the beginning of the academic year 2006-07, and the University proposed to monitor their compliance at the end of that academic year. Having carried out the monitoring exercise in May 2007 the Registry found that the four departments had still not produced programme specifications for all their courses. The team was told that the departments in question would make good the deficiencies by the beginning of the academic year 2007-08.

74 UWL has no template or model for programme specifications. For examples of templates, departments are referred to others which have good practice in this area. One department has produced a template with helpful notes of guidance for its use. Another has adopted a different model for its programme specifications. Both models demonstrate good practice, and both are effective. However, as UWL has recently produced a standard template for module specifications, published in the QALM,

UWL should consider the use of departmental good practice as the basis of a single model for programme specifications. The team considered that this would be of significant benefit: for example, to students comparing single honours, joint and combined programmes.

75 UWL has made use of the *Code of practice* in developing some aspects of policy and practice for the management of standards and quality, although the review team was not provided with evidence that demonstrated that UWL had considered the purpose of the *Code* and reflected on its practices to make necessary steps to ensure that appropriate changes are being introduced. In some regards, attention to the Academic Infrastructure is focused more effectively at departmental rather than institutional level, particularly in connection with collaborative provision, where some departments make explicit and structured use of the *Code*, the FHEQ and subject benchmark statements. Institutional and departmental quality handbooks draw attention to the FHEQ and subject benchmark statements but, in practice, the latter are used more generally and effectively than the former.

76 The review team concluded that UWL has not met the expectations for the need for programme specifications in a timely or concerted manner, and some programmes still lack these key elements of the Academic Infrastructure.

## Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies

77 UWL has no externally accredited provision.

## Student representation at operational and institutional level

78 There is a comprehensive system of formal Students' Union (SU) representation on significant UWL committees, for example, the Council and SEB, as well as representation on user groups for services such as the library. Students also have representation on the Advisory Group on Student Welfare and Support. At departmental level students do not have a place in governance; however, all departments have, by ordinance, long-standing staff-student consultative committees (SSCCs) that meet two or three times a year. SSCC representatives are determined by election from the student body and represent each year of a programme. Larger departments may have separate undergraduate and postgraduate SSCCs. The minutes of SSCCs are reviewed by the Registrar and Secretary who reports a summary to the SEB. The SEB has as one of its terms of reference to take appropriate action in response to SSCC minutes, which indicates seriousness in their treatment. The SED explained that the size of the University also enables students to make informal representations due to the close contact between staff and students.

79 The University, in its SED, stated that 'there are many opportunities at Lampeter for the student voice to be heard' and clearly believes that students can directly influence polices and quality of provision. The SED also described how student feedback is obtained on modules every year as part of its student Quinquennial Review of departments process has led the SEB to identify as good practice the return to SSCCs of feedback about the previous year's modular evaluations. That process of quinquennial review, as a result of initial evaluations, will be improved by including meetings with a range of students, plus where possible, students involved in collaborative partnerships. Representatives of the SU confirmed that they were able to influence the agenda of institutional committees upon which they sat, speaking particularly well of their experience on the Advisory Group on Student Welfare and Support.

80 Variation in knowledge of representative structures was apparent from the review team's discussions with students, with particular weakness at postgraduate level. There is no current system for the training of SSCC representatives. Students thought that involvement with SSCCs was generally a positive experience and that attention was paid

to students' views. Postgraduate students who were unsure of their formal representation seemed satisfied that informal links would be effective. Students registered with collaborative partners were clear and enthusiastically positive about the forums they had that were equivalent to the on-campus SSCCs, and were able to give examples of effective representation.

81 Communication regarding different aspects of student representation was varied. For example, the SU, in order to support SSCC representatives properly, had experienced difficulties in obtaining their names in a timely manner. According to a sample of departmental handbooks, practice in communicating the outcomes of SSCCs was uniform in terms of using notice-boards, but students themselves seemed less certain about how effective this mechanism was. Whilst varying in the detailed descriptions of the functions and operation of SSCCs, all these handbooks were clear in describing the essentials of the system.

82 The review team found evidence that the existing forms of student representation provided opportunities for students to influence the assurance of quality and standards. Primarily these exist at departmental operational level, where students could have a direct impact upon provision, and at institutional level, where the SU is able to have a dialogue with the institution as a corporate body. Given the potential for active involvement that these routes provide, the team encourages UWL to ensure that they remain effective by, for example, working actively with the SU in developing the skills and understanding of SSCC representatives and supporting departments in promoting involvement with the SSCC system amongst the wider student body. Given UWL's belief that module questionnaires are a feature of student representation, the systematic presentation of summaries of outcomes to the student body via SSCCs, as recommended in a recent Quinquennial Review, would strengthen the system.

83 At present, students have limited input into formal review procedures for programmes and departments, although UWL intends to strengthen student input to the departmental Quinquennial Review process. The SU, through its representation on SEB, receives reports on departmental and programme review events. The students that the review team met believed that they generally had good access to staff on an informal basis. In collaborative arrangements, the students met by the team had effective representative systems performing functions analogous to those of the on-campus SSCCs, but had no effective role in central representation because of a limited engagement with the SU. Given the high, and increasing, proportion of its student body that is studying off-campus, UWL might consider how it should facilitate the more effective collection of their views.

## Procedures for student complaints and appeals

84 UWL stated that its procedures in this regard accord with the *Code of practice* and that the appropriate regulations are made clear to students at the beginning of each session. The SED explained that, in line with the exhortations of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, the complaints procedure has recently been simplified from three stages to two. Students studying via collaborative provision follow the same complaints procedures as on-campus students.

85 The SED expressed the view that the current UW appeals process has stood the test of time and for that reason UWL is unlikely to make significant changes even though there is the freedom to do so. The SED stated that there are very few claims for verification, appeals, or complaints. This is in contrast to the view expressed by students who told the review team that there were many complaints brought forward through the SU. This divergent view on the volume of complaints may be attributed to whether they are regarded as being handled informally or formally.

86 The review team found that the home page for current UWL students linked directly through to the formal guidance for Consideration of Student Complaints and

Grievances. All examination appeals are now the responsibility of UWL. The home page of information for new students, however, refers students to the Registry should they wish to use the UW appeals/verification procedure. The latter is at variance with the SED which stated that the appeals/verification procedure is available on its own website as well as that of the UW.

87 Students met by the review team were confident that they knew where the necessary information could be obtained should they wish to make formal complaints or appeals. This confidence extended to students studying with collaborative partners. Students were generally of the opinion that many minor matters could be satisfactorily resolved informally by virtue of readily accessible and responsive staff. Fundamental information on complaints processes was seen by the team in several of the student handbooks of which it had sight, but in one sample this information was reduced to urging students to talk to their personal tutor in the first instance. The team would encourage the University to adopt consistent practices in clearly documenting complaints and appeals procedures.

## Feedback from students, graduates and employers

88 Formal student feedback is obtained via SSCCs and particularly module questionnaires, but the SED also noted good informal links. UWL has decided to systematically monitor student satisfaction through its own biennial student satisfaction survey that has been run twice to date. The survey contents were based upon initial work undertaken in staff and student workshops. The questions enabled exploration of responses in terms of personal circumstances and characteristics. This major survey was augmented with subsidiary questionnaires, for example, on accommodation, and other means of acquiring student feedback when necessary. The extensive statistical data were analysed by an external consultant. There are different versions of the survey for on and off-campus students and this has enabled UWL to establish that its distance-learning students are particularly satisfied. One result of this survey activity has been that improved Service Level Agreements have been concluded for the library and University Computing Service (UCS).

89 The review team heard considerable evidence of a systematic approach to the use of end-of-module questionnaires for both on and off-campus students, including those studying with collaborative partners. In discussions with staff, and in documents with which it was supplied, the use of such questionnaires for annual review of modules was shown to be embedded. Additional use was as input into evidence of staff teaching quality, sometimes as part of more substantial departmental-level rolling programmes of module review.

90 There is an Employability Unit that is expending effort through the Graduate Opportunities (GO) Wales scheme to find workplace learning (see below, paragraph 133). Aside from the beneficial relationships established with employers through that route, the SED did not describe any formal feedback sought from employers or use made of employment data, and this situation was confirmed in meetings with staff.

91 UWL is improving its relationships with its alumni and is initially doing so through the Lampeter Society (the alumni society) with, for example, a newsletter for subscribing members. Whilst relationships with alumni are now more positive, the SED does not describe attempts to capture feedback that may assist the University in its management of quality and standards, or learning opportunities. In a meeting with staff, the review team was told that so far there was only limited use made of feedback from alumni, but that some individuals were taking active roles in the governance of the institution by sitting on the Council.

92 In conclusion, the review team considered that the substantial effort being put into the internal satisfaction surveys and active responses to the results, indicated that UWL is taking student views of service provision seriously.

## Student admissions and the use made of progression and completion statistics

93 The SED referred to UWL's admissions policy which seeks to maintain a 'diverse and balanced' student body through the use a 'transparent' application system. Entry requirements are defined in programme specifications, where they exist, and approved through the validation process. UWL requires that these entry requirements are compatible with its generic admission criteria which are published on its website. Admissions decisions are made by departments. Partner institutions are given responsibility for admitting students who meet the approved entry requirements, and their admissions processes are subject to UWL's recruitment and equal opportunities policies. Applications for accreditation of prior learning must be approved by the department concerned. The review team found that the admissions policy and requirements were indeed transparent.

94 The SED provided little information about the use made of student progression and completion statistics, beyond noting the Registry's role in producing statistics on student retention. The review team learned that statistics for student recruitment, progression and achievement, are generated variously at institutional and departmental levels, and the team was told that this was because the data concerned served different purposes.

95 In view of a non-completion rate which it recognises as high, and as part of its Widening Access Strategy 2006-09, UWL has focused particularly on student retention, by producing a Retention Report and action plan. One new measure taken as a result of the Retention Report was the sending of recruitment and retention statistics monthly to SMT and departments. SMT reviews these statistics, although the review team was provided with no evidence of year-on-year analyses and comparisons. The Student Support Office has a central role in addressing retention issues, and the Student Support Officer meets regularly with departmental welfare representatives on a group and individual basis, and discusses inter alia retention statistics which are provided monthly by the Registry. The Advisory Group on Student Support and Guidance, which reports directly to Senate, considers matters of progression and retention.

96 The review team concluded that UWL had developed strong, integrated measures for student support, to address the needs of widening participation students and improve retention. It also noted, however, that UWL does not use statistical evidence, at institutional level, to analyse the progress and achievement of widening participation students and evaluate the success of its support measures. Whilst noting UWL's explanation that this was because its emphasis on widening participation is comparatively recent, the team encourages it to use statistical analyses in its monitoring of success in this key area of its institutional strategy.

97 Annual cumulative summaries of degree outcomes are also presented to SMT and SEB, but these are not analysed at the level of departments or partner institutions. Statistics on recruitment and admissions are systematically analysed by SMT and the Marketing and Recruitment Committee. Beyond the focus on retention, noted above, the review team found no evidence for systematic analysis of progression and achievement statistics, at institutional level, across the University and its partner institutions, at SEB, SMT or heads of departments' meetings. The team also noted that the University did not appear to compare its students' performances with those of other institutions, in Wales or beyond.

98 Likewise, the review team found little evidence of systematic statistical analysis at departmental level, beyond a focus on student numbers. Department committees receive retention statistics, but minutes did not record what was done in response to them. One exception was a comparative analysis of award classifications at a partner institution and at Lampeter, used in correspondence between a department and an external examiner. Some

analysis of student performance data is carried out by individual members of staff, but in the absence of annual monitoring reports such analyses were considered by the team to be of limited value.

99 The review team found that UWL uses statistical evidence to highlight and address issues around student retention but very limited use is made of progression and completion statistics to routinely inform the monitoring of standards or student attainment. Considering its uses of statistics, the University has noted that some cohort numbers are so small as to devalue some aspects of statistical analysis. However, the team considered that significant levels of analysis are possible and would be of benefit, at institutional level and in all departments, in the evaluation of provision and the management of standards.

## Assurance of the quality of teaching staff: appointment, appraisal and reward

100 The SED stated that UWL 'has always recognized that one of its major strengths is the quality of the workforce'. The SED identified progress with the national pay framework and a job evaluation scheme as significant recent developments although not yet completed at the time of the review visit. Although additional personnel staff have been appointed, the Human Resources Strategy (2005-2009) is awaiting final approval. The review team was able to see evidence that the staff information section on the intranet is regularly updated and expanded and considered that this process would be of benefit in progressing effective communication for all staff, one of the objectives of the Human Resource Strategy.

101 The review team noted that the appointment process is being centralised within the emerging personnel function. The team noted examples of departments who expect shortlisted applicants to have actively engaged in developmental pedagogical activities prior to appointment and there is an expectation, although not yet a requirement, that newly-appointed staff consider undertaking the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching (PGCHET) (see below, paragraph 107). The team heard that the standard procedure is for the two-day interviews for academic appointments to include delivery of a 'mock' lecture at a specified level which is open to departmental staff. This, the team considered, highlights appropriately the importance that UWL gives to teaching quality.

102 Part of the Human Resources Strategy includes the development of a centralised staff development/training database. A two-day Staff Induction Programme for all categories of staff, was piloted in October 2006; the review team was told that the full induction process would take a year. All new staff are allocated a colleague for informal support within their department or section; the team heard that staff found the induction programme helpful and valued having a 'buddy' or 'mentor'. The team considered that the induction programme has the potential to further foster collegiality through its mentoring system as well as setting the scene for ongoing staff development activities. The recently revised criteria for academic promotion include participation in peer observation and staff development activities in the learning and teaching evidence base.

103 The previous QAA quality audit report, 1999, asked UWL to consider the 'advisability' of extending its then appraisal system, which was commended, to include staff on fixed-term contracts. Since then the institutional system has fallen into abeyance, although a number of departments operate equivalent developmental systems of their own which are generally welcomed by staff. Implementation of the new pay framework according to the SED is UWL's 'top priority at present' so the team was told that it could take two years before a new appraisal system is fully developed and implemented. Given that the then appraisal system had been highlighted previously by QAA, the team was disappointed to learn that little institutional level activity in this area had taken place since the last review. As some departmental practice in this area was meeting the needs of staff, the team would encourage UWL to prioritise its re-introduction.

104 The review team considered that, although not all staff-related issues arising from the previous audit report had been addressed by UWL to date, recent and forthcoming developments within the personnel function should help to assure and enhance the quality of teaching staff. In particular, the team concluded that, once implemented, the objectives of the Human Resource Strategy as outlined in the SED should help to ensure a proactive institutional-wide approach to the appointment, appraisal and reward of its staff.

## Assurance of the quality of teaching staff through staff support and development

105 The previous quality audit report, 1999, asked UWL to consider the 'advisability' of the provision of systematic staff development for research students engaged in teaching; and the improvement of its staff development provision. An Advisory Group on the Professional Development of Staff was set up in October 2005; staff development needs are identified through the Advisory Group and through heads of departments, some of whom meet with individual staff on an annual basis. Heads of departments are asked to encourage staff to participate in the University's staff development sessions

106 A number of staff development sessions have taken place, but attendance is not mandatory, although it is recorded in individual personnel files. UWL has identified an additional one or two days each year for all-staff development and training. Establishing a central record of attendance at staff development activities is one objective of the Human Resources Strategy.

107 UWL is currently piloting a PGCHET which has been submitted for approval by the HEA. The review team heard of support from departments for this course and increasing staff interest. Some funding is available for staff who travel to other institutions to attend sessions. In 2006-07, the scheme was open to full-time Lampeter academic staff; in future it might be extended to part-time staff, staff involved with further education colleges and staff in Open Learning partnerships. Postgraduate research students can register, although few teach; the team heard that some postgraduate research students who do teach may receive guidance on teaching and assessment, but others do not, depending on the department. Staff are enabled to avail themselves of training external to the University.

108 UWL does not have a policy on peer observation of teaching, although it takes place in some departments. The review team was provided with examples of documentation used in one department and noted effective practice in another department where staff routinely engage in peer observation and, on a sampling basis, with staff in partner institutions. Otherwise, there is little systematic involvement with peer observation and no consistent framework at departmental or institutional level. The team considered that this was a missed opportunity for valuable staff development.

109 The review team heard that heads of department meetings are considered a valuable forum for sharing good practice, which is also disseminated through the annual summary of good practice identified by Triennial Reviews. UWL's approach to enhancement includes staff development, not only from formal internal provision but also from participation in, for example, the Benchmarking of e-Learning in UK Higher Education with the HEA and individual staff links with other institutions and external bodies.

110 The review team viewed positively the work of the Advisory Group and the development of the PGCHET, noting the enthusiasm of those involved and the will to expand provision. However, the team saw evidence of a lack of clarity as to the extent of the overall financial provision for staff development and training given that budgets are currently held by Personnel, by the Academic Staff Development Adviser and also by some departments and sections.

111 The team concluded that, despite there being no institutional overview of the entirety of provision, there was valuable staff development provision taking place within the University, and would urge the University to take cognisance of all such activities within a systematic development framework for its staff, including postgraduate students with teaching responsibilities. Given that the previous QAA report highlighted the advisability of improving and extending the then staff development provision, the team considered that now would be an opportune time to carry this forward. Also, the team considered that the introduction of peer observation policy and the extension of a peer observation of teaching throughout the University would be an effective means of staff development.

## Assurance of the quality of teaching delivered through distributed and distance methods

112 Increasing use of flexible and distributed learning (FDL) was identified in the SED as a significant recent development, and therefore quality assurance processes were under continual review to ensure comparable treatment with on-campus students. UWL does not have off-site intranet access, nor does it have a virtual learning environment to support students, although this is under active consideration; when e-learning takes place, it is through an individual departmental website.

113 According to the SED, several departments are involved in 'blended learning' through a variety of different modes of study. Some departments are engaged in e-learning with some sharing of good practice across departments; the review team saw evidence that, as this mode of study increases, there is a move towards University investment in a common institutional platform to enhance student learning opportunities and enable better student support. The review team noted that UWL was also considering the development of a common manual for students involving all departments who run distance-learning modules. This seemed to the team to be a positive move and would facilitate staff development for both UWL and partner staff.

114 All staff involved in collaborative provision and distance learning are approved by UWL, normally before commencement of teaching. Although no time limit for approval is set, the review team was told that partner staff were kept under review and would no longer be permitted by partners to teach on the University programmes if student feedback or performance was unsatisfactory. Regular contact with partner staff ensures informal peer review and staff development takes place. Course directors' conferences and tutor training days may be held and partner staff can register for PhD study at a reduced fee.

115 It is UWL policy to encourage departments to use a mixture of delivery modes for postgraduate programmes; the SED stated that quality assurance methods for all modes of study are the same 'as far as possible'. The QALM makes specific reference to distance learning and the QMCA indicates that collaborative arrangements may be made with distance-learning providers without specifying different or additional requirements. The review team heard that reports of Triennial Reviews would cover all programmes, whether delivered on or off-campus, although these distinctions would not necessarily be separately identified in the report (see below, paragraph 147).

116 UWL uses a variety of terms to describe flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning) and has not developed institutional definitions, although the review team was told that arrangements were specified in memoranda of agreement if relevant. The team took the view that it would be helpful to departments, partners and students alike if more explicit reference were made to this provision within the quality manuals themselves. The team saw examples of departmental handbooks prepared for partners and students that make clear the respective responsibilities of UWL and the partner institution, and give guidance to partner staff on UWL teaching and learning policies.

117 The review team learned that the future direction of e-learning is currently under discussion and would encourage UWL to make full use of the *Code of practice* as it develops its institutional polices and practices with respect

to distance learning in general and e-learning in particular (see above, paragraph 75). The team considered that UWL's involvement in the HEA Benchmarking of e-Learning in UK Higher Education excercise would be of benefit to UWL, its staff and students.

## Learning support resources

118 The PVC is responsible for the library, UCS, and the Media Centre with Reprographics Unit. These three groupings constitute the Information Services Division. They operate against annually reviewed comprehensive service level agreements. The SED stated that the library special collections are to be housed in a new building being erected adjacent to the main library and that there is increasing access to electronic sources. The UCS provides several workstation rooms with seven-day access and, in one case, 24-hour access also. Students living in halls have campus network sockets in each room. Audiovisual equipment is available on loan from the Media Centre with Reprographics Unit, which also provides a range of production services.

119 Students, through their survey and in meetings with the review team, raised questions about the adequacy of library facilities, in particular opening hours and the provision of sufficient relevant texts. It is possible that the latter problem is particular to given academic areas, whilst departments may provide their own supplemental libraries. UWL's own Student Satisfaction Survey also indicated that library provision had a noticeably lower level of satisfaction. The University has responded to these issues by the recent appointment of a librarian and considerable additional expenditure. Students studying with collaborative partners met by the team were satisfied with the resources made available to them, although in the case of some distance-learning students it had taken time to bring module support material up to a good level. The library acknowledges the needs of off-campus students, both postgraduates and distance learners, and attempts to provide a service that is equivalent to that of on-campus students. Students told the team that the appointment of the librarian and the effective use of the Library User Group are improving communications between the library and departments.

120 The recent updating of computing facilities was also appreciated by students, as were the term-time access hours. Out of term-time, students believed that access varied inequitably between departments and could be a particular issue for overseas students remaining resident during vacation periods. However, recent improvements, including the 24-hour provision though security card-controlled access, were acknowledged. Some departments have their own facilities intended to supplement central facilities with more specialist software.

121 UWL has recently changed its approach to the maintenance and development of teaching space. It has put in place a rolling programme of refurbishment that includes ensuring baseline provision of support for modern ICT-supported means of delivery. In response to the opportunities provided by technical advances, and in acknowledgement of changing student expectation, it is intending to rollout interactive whiteboards as part of the baseline equipment provision in teaching rooms.

122 Many of the improvements to learning support resources have been facilitated by recent changes to budgetary mechanisms that enable the PVC to make supportive business cases to the institution in the annual budgeting round. This increased flexibility has led to more responsive and service-orientated outcomes that should lead to increasing levels of student satisfaction. There is now an effective monitoring process in place via the Student Satisfaction Survey, and early results have influenced priorities for enhancing learning support. The review team concluded that the management and funding of learning resources had undergone significant recent improvement, in line with one of UWL's strategic aims, and with concomitant benefits for students.

## Academic guidance, support and supervision

123 All students are allocated a personal tutor. The precise nature of the academic support provided to students varies according to the department with which they are registered and the nature of the programme that they are following. Student handbooks that were seen by the review team all contained information about the role of personal tutors, particularly in connection with monitoring academic progress. Departments provide a hierarchy of academic advice for undergraduates that may include personal tutors, Module leaders, and directors of studies. At an institutional level, there are Good Practice Guides published for both taught and research postgraduate studies that explain the nature of support that will be provided. At postgraduate level, where appropriate, the relevant Research Councils' codes of practice are also employed. UWL makes much of its small scale and the general approachability of its staff.

124 A significant cross-institutional curriculum approach to some aspects of academic support has arisen from concerns to enhance the employability of graduates. Also, following the RDP report (see above, paragraph 24), UWL has taken steps to introduce generic skills and PDP. The point has now been reached where Study Skills and generic IT modules have been introduced in all programmes. The Study Skills module within a programme is the means whereby PDP is introduced. Study Skills modules also cover, inter alia, information handling skills, with input from library staff.

125 In line with its Teaching and Learning and Widening Access Strategies, UWL delivers a range of specific initiatives to encourage progression into higher education from under-represented groups. The review team met students who had personally benefited from this aspect of the Strategy, and staff gave the team examples of individuals who had been greatly able to profit from these initiatives. The team, therefore, considered that the effective and enthusiastic implementation of University strategy in this area, supported by coherent institutional oversight, was an example of good practice.

126 A characteristic of many programmes at UWL is considerable curriculum flexibility in terms of the topics that may be studied within a programme and, for full-time undergraduate programmes, the rate at which students may take credits within a given academic year. Many modules are offered as options at both higher education levels 2 and 3 (CQFW levels 5 and 6). Documentation is available to help students in their choice of modules and may, for example, include module descriptors or module summaries, although in the latter case, the full descriptors are available from departments. Definitive advice on the nature of modules and the appropriateness of options was usually available from relevant module leaders and other staff such as personal tutors or course leaders.

127 In the course of discussions with students, the review team heard mixed views about the value of the flexibility offered by the regulations for undergraduates to undertake varied numbers of credits during each term of their first year. The regulations state that students will follow 'normally 60 credits in each of the first two terms' and that 'Exceptions to the foregoing may be permitted subject to discussion with and the approval of the relevant Chair(s) of Department(s)'. The team learnt of some students who had signed for up to 90 credits in their first term, and had subsequently struggled to complete their studies. Documents seen by the team showed that while staff would try to deter unbalanced loads, they believed that 'the final decision lies with the individual student'. The team considered that this view may no longer sit well with UWL's successful strategy towards widening participation and its increasingly diverse student body, and is at odds with its desire to aid student progression.

128 For joint honours students, concerns were expressed about the degree of academic support and oversight offered when exercising the potentially wide range of modular choice available to them. One problem was that by directing choice in particular directions, doubt could be cast on whether the options followed continued to accord with the registered programme title. Another was the availability

of potential options. For joint programmes, departmental administrators ensure that core modules are timetabled to guarantee availability. This was not the case for options, where clashes could occur. Under such circumstances, a range of responses might be available, such as rescheduling to a different group within a module, but ultimately the students would be left to make the adaptations required if the option were to be followed. Given the emphasis placed on the wide range of joint and combined honours programmes, the review team was concerned that students on such programmes might not receive the same level of support as single honours students. Despite this potential weakness in the option system, the team was also informed of notable departmental attempts to accommodate individual student choice, for example, by the provision of 'reading classes'.

129 In support of its widening participation policy for student recruitment, UWL has also established a range of activities to make and sustain contact with school and adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the review team heard anecdotal evidence which demonstrated the success of these measures. Foundation ('Level 0') programmes are offered to students who would benefit from further study before entering degree programmes at Level 1. The team found that, contrary to the University's expectations, and to the surprise of senior managers, some students who had successfully completed Foundation programmes were not allowed to progress to the degree courses of their choice. It was thought by the University that this anomaly, which was not apparently noted by the Quinquennial Review of the department in question, might derive from students' inappropriate choices of modules in Foundation programmes.

130 The review team found there were potential negative consequences from the considerable flexibility on offer, lapses in support for some individual students that were particularly serious for those at potential risk, and variable experiences for single versus joint/combined honours students. Overall, the team considered it to be advisable for UWL to review the totality of this area of the student experience so as to enable students to make module choices that provide balanced and realistic workloads and meet the requirements of the awards for which they are registered.

## Personal support and guidance

131 UWL outlined in its SED a considerable range of personal support services. Of particular note are services provided to international students and students with disabilities. All these services come under the umbrella of the Student Support Office (SSO) whose head reports to the PVC. Also reporting to the PVC are the Employability Unit and the Widening Access Unit. At departmental level, there are welfare representatives and personal tutors.

132 The SSO provides advice, guidance and support to students across a wide range of needs. Many of these are related to student's health and pastoral care. The SSO has an institutional responsibility to raise awareness of legal obligations in respect of students with disabilities, arranges for suitable individual assessments and disseminates any required reasonable adjustments to departments. An active chaplaincy works closely with the various support agencies.

133 The employability of students is of particular institutional concern, and has led to curricula changes (see above, paragraph 124). The Employability Unit provides help for students relating to their careers and options for further study, as well as leading the employment-related modules. The Unit provides students with the opportunity to receive award-bearing credit for their workplace experience or experience as an SU officer. A key aspect of the Unit's work is provided via its involvement in the Graduate Opportunities Wales programme.

134 Monitoring of services is through the student satisfaction surveys mentioned above and the Advisory Group on Student Support and Guidance that reports to Senate. The latter has a wide oversight of all the services and

related issues. The SSO meets heads of departments and welfare representatives regularly and this provides a further opportunity for monitoring.

135 Students met by the review team generally spoke highly of their individual support and the good relationships that they had with staff. This was particularly true of those individuals who had needs related to disabilities. Overseas students are provided with a range of support services to help them adapt to a different educational and cultural experience. The team learned that UCS staff provide students with individual help and advice beyond their formal remit, getting to know many of them individually, and actively referring to other support areas when the need arises, for example, through disclosure of disabilities. Staff viewed the small scale of UWL and its compact campus as being of great advantage in providing individual support to students due to the many informal opportunities provided to check individual student progress.

136 The review team was impressed by the comprehensive institutional infrastructure provided to address a wide range of individual student circumstances, and the attitude of the staff involved in providing support services. There was evident concern to provide an experience tailored to meet the requirements of a wide range of individual student needs. Students spoke highly of this central support and the team considered that its effective provision was an example of good practice. At departmental level students generally spoke highly of their relationships with staff and the opportunities to find help from a wide range of individuals, even if that did not necessarily include their personal tutor. The team, therefore, concluded that the comprehensive range of centrally provided student support was an example of good practice.

## Collaborative provision

137 The SED stated that UWL has significantly extended its range of collaborative partnerships since the previous quality audit report in 1999. At the time of this present review it had three partner further education colleges in Wales, two partnerships with private colleges in London, collaborative arrangements for the delivery of postgraduate programmes in 14 theological institutions in the UK and overseas, and 24 partnerships through which undergraduate programmes are delivered via open learning, again in the UK and overseas. Collaborative provision accounts for more than half of UWL's 1,404 full-time equivalent (FTE) students in 2006-07; the most substantial provision being found in the postgraduate programmes, with 445 FTEs, and in the open learning partnerships with 356 FTEs.

138 Collaborative provision is linked to two departments: Theology and Religious Studies which has some long-standing partnership arrangements, and Management and IT which has fewer, more recently established, collaborative arrangements. Partnership lists, compiled separately by departments, were presented together as a Register of Partnerships. Individual departments publish lists of partner institutions on their websites. The University's Strategic Plan proposes further expansion of collaborative provision, and more departments are expected to be engaged in this activity in the future.

139 Departments have primary responsibility for managing collaborative provision. However, it is noted in QMCA that SMT may or may not renew a partnership, reporting to Senate and Council for endorsement of this decision. Both departments involved in collaborative provision have appointed academic staff to manage the links and liaise with partner institutions, and the review team found that these links work effectively. The department with the most extensive partnership networks has an annual Course Directors' Conference at Lampeter which is attended by representatives of many of its partnership centres. These conferences, which include updates on matters of academic standards and quality, are welcomed and found to be helpful by partnership staff.

140 The same department has also established an Advisory Committee which functions as

a quality committee for all its collaborative programmes. Summaries of its minutes are sent to the department committee. The review team was told that reports of visits to partner institutions are sent to heads of department and eventually to SEB, but it saw no evidence of such reports in SEB minutes. Indeed, while the evidence indicated that SEB approves new partnerships, programmes and modules, the team considered that the reporting arrangements did not enable this most senior part of the deliberative structure to review systematically the health of the University's current partnerships. Likewise, while SMT considers new partnership proposals, it does not receive reports on existing partnerships. On one occasion when the report of a departmental visit to a partner institution was sent to SMT, this body noted that such reports would not normally be sent to it 'as they were departmental matters'.

141 UWL's capacity for institutional oversight of quality and standards in partnerships is severely constrained by the limitations of its internal reporting and monitoring systems (see above, paragraphs 32 and 44). This lack of institutional oversight was illustrated by a case reported to a department committee in 2005. A programme leading to the award of UW degrees was being delivered through a collaborative arrangement which had not been formally established, nor secured through a memorandum of agreement. The department concerned had become aware that the programme was not being managed satisfactorily, and proposed to conclude the arrangement as soon as possible. The review team was assured that the arrangement had been concluded. Because departmental committee minutes are not sent to SEB, Senate and some senior managers were unaware of this problem and the attendant risks to students.

142 UWL does not distinguish different models of collaboration, although it uses the term 'franchise' in connection with its HEFCW-funded further education college partnership provision. UWL has recently changed its quality assurance procedures for collaborative provision so that they are 'fully comparable' with those used on campus. The University's QMCA was approved by SEB in February 2007. This manual emphasises that the management of collaborative partnerships must comply with the University's QALM. The QMCA broadly reflects Part A of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* as UWL claimed, although the review team was not provided with evidence that demonstrated that UWL had considered the purpose of the *Code* and reflected on its own practices. As the institution progressively develops this manual through further iterations, it will no doubt wish to establish policy positions on matters such as the role of externality, the signing of memoranda of agreement, and serial arrangements, which do not appear to be addressed in the current version. It may also wish to clarify some procedures: for example, the QMCA states that partner institutions must update periodically the information about staffing arrangements supplied to UWL, but the period and mechanism are not defined.

143 Both departments with collaborative provision have met UWL's requirement, set out in the QMCA, for a departmental partnership handbook setting out procedures for the management of quality and standards. These handbooks are effective and helpful, although one was more comprehensive and reflected current UWL policy more completely, for example, in reproducing the institution's generic assessment criteria. The review team encourages UWL to consider whether its collective purposes would be better served, and economies of effort achieved, by producing a single institutional handbook of this kind, based upon best current practice in the departments.

144 The review team saw evidence that a pre-QMCA version of formation and approval process had been followed in the setting up of a partnership in 2005. Members of the department concerned had visited the college in question and produced a report on its capacity to deliver the proposed programme. However, apart from the financial checks made by the Finance Department, no-one outside the proposing department was involved in this

evaluative process which was fundamental to the quality assurance of the proposed arrangement. A senior institutional manager who scrutinised the proposal documentation drew attention to the lack of externality, or even an independent view from within UWL, in the evaluation of the prospective partner. The process for the formal approval of partnership proposals through UWL's committee structure was noted as inadequate. This latter issue has been clarified through the QMCA; however, the team was told that although the matter of independence and externality had been a matter of 'robust debate', it had been decided that such measures should not be required for partnership approval. The team concurred with the view, expressed in the 2005 senior management correspondence noted above, that the lack of independent checks in the evaluation process was unfortunate, given that departments had 'a vested interest in gaining approval'. The team considered it essential that, as it takes steps to make its oversight and management of quality and standards more effective and consistent, the University should review its policy and procedures for establishing new partnerships, to provide institutional dimensions appropriate to its responsibilities.

145 A model memorandum of agreement is given in the QMCA. These inter-institutional agreements are signed by the VC. Memoranda of agreement are in place for some partnerships but at the time of the review one partnership, which has been operating outside the UK since 2005, still lacked a signed agreement. UWL staff explained that the delay had been caused by differences between the legal frameworks in the two countries. The review team believed that UWL should develop sufficient capacity at institutional level to secure all collaborative provision through memoranda of agreement in a timely fashion.

146 Courses delivered through collaborative arrangements are approved in the same way as for on-campus provision, and the review team saw evidence that this worked appropriately. While UWL requires triennial rather than annual reports on the monitoring of its programmes (see above, paragraph 43), one department has recognised the need for more frequent reporting and has recently introduced an annual reporting process based on a pro forma which structures and stimulates critical evaluation and action planning. The review team noted that this good practice was worthy of wider use through adoption at institutional level.

147 UWL's collaborative quality assurance procedures now include periodic reviews of partnerships, and of programmes delivered through them. However, because these procedures are very recently established, UWL has not yet begun to implement them, nor apparently to coordinate them at institutional level. The review team found no evidence that Triennial Reviews of programmes have so far included collaborative provision, but was assured that they would in future do so, in accordance with the QALM. The team encourages UWL to ensure that the Triennial Review cycle explicitly includes collaborative programmes.

148 The QMCA requires departments to carry out a review of each partnership at five-yearly intervals and this is expected to include a review of the inter-institutional agreement (although this linkage is not explicit in the document). The review methodology is in effect left to the discretion of individual departments, but the review team found some uncertainty in one department about the implementation of these partnership reviews. UWL recognised that many of its current partnerships predate the current quality assurance framework for collaboration; the review team concluded that UWL should plan and execute without delay a rolling programme of partnership reviews. These should be led at institutional level and based upon a standard methodology, in order to secure corporate responsibility and oversight.

149 UWL requires that its assessment policies, procedures and criteria are applied in all collaborative provision. All student work in collaborative provision is second-marked by University staff. External examiners have

sometimes pointed out a need to emphasise the consistent use of the University's assessment processes (see above, paragraph 53). Examining boards are managed as for campus-based programmes. Award certificates and transcripts are produced by the University.

150 On the basis of the issues summarised above, the review team concluded that some aspects of the UWL's management of partnerships, particularly in connection with memoranda of agreement, put standards and quality at risk. The team noted that QAA, in its response (in 2004) to the University's progress report on its 1999 institutional review , reminded the institution of its obligations, as an awarding body, to secure the standards of its awards in any future collaborative provision. The team considered that the University had not paid sufficient or timely attention to this reminder. The team accepted that new quality assurance procedures for collaborative provision are now in place, but was not convinced that their implementation, particularly in connection with partnership review, is proceeding with due urgency. The lack of externality or internal independence in the evaluation of prospective partnerships also constitutes a risk to quality. Moreover, even if the new procedures were improved, and implemented promptly, fundamental flaws in UWL's committee reporting systems would still leave Senate and senior managers unsighted for long periods of time. As UWL establishes structures and systems for effective and consistent institutional oversight and management of quality and standards, the review team considered it essential that the University review urgently its capacity to coordinate and oversee partnership activity at institutional level, so that it can take full corporate responsibility for collaborative provision and assure itself that that all partnerships are secure and sustainable.

## Section 3: the review investigations: published information

### The students' experience of published information and other information available to them

151 The SED stated that UWL takes seriously the importance of ensuring that published information is appropriate for effective communication and is accurate and reliable. UWL provides a variety of information for prospective and current students, both on and off-campus. Prospective students can access this information through the website or by published undergraduate prospectuses. On registration, on-campus students receive a variety of information such as detailed printed departmental handbooks, and have access to the University's intranet where University information is available; distance-learning students are given relevant printed material and/or access to secure departmental websites. Students in collaborative partnerships normally access material through the partner institution and some also have access to password protected departmental websites. The review team saw examples of web-based information for partners and their students that were well set out, clear and comprehensive.

152 The SED stated that there are clear controls in place for the management of public information, acknowledging UWL's responsibility extends to that issued by partner institutions. University internet pages are maintained centrally and some departmental web pages are maintained centrally with local editing. Some departments retain responsibility for both the editing and maintenance of their web pages, although some of these do not use the standard University format. The website is considered easy to navigate and is kept under regular review to ensure good accessibility.

153 Web-based material is updated centrally as required, and at least four times a year after liaison with departments about content, although the undergraduate prospectus is not printed

annually. Some departments ensure consistency by having the same person responsible for both web and printed material; others distribute responsibilities. The postgraduate prospectus is web-based and some departments publish their own course prospectuses.

154 Where relevant, departments list partner institutions on their website and may also provide a direct link to the partner's website, thus making both academic and administrative information available. Partners draft publicity material for collaborative provision students (both web and printed) and the text is approved by UWL.

155 University and departmental printed information is revised annually and students are encouraged to look up information on the University website, which includes a code of conduct for staff and students alike. Departmental handbooks include information about assessment, late submission, unfair practice, appeals and complaints procedures.

156 The RDP report called for a review of the information available to research students. The SED stated that an action plan had been put in place in response to this report and the review team was told that this activity was under way.

157 The SWS addressed the accuracy, completeness and reliability of information and was generally satisfied, as were many of the students whom review the team met. However, some students were of the opinion that some information in the prospectus and on the website, was out of date.

158 Students were aware that departmental handbooks include information about assessment, late submission, unfair practice, appeals and complaints procedures although the SWS stated a significant minority of students said marking criteria had not been explained adequately (see also above, paragraph 53). The review team heard that there was some variation between departments with respect to dissertation guidance and extensions to submission dates for coursework. The team heard from students that prospectus and induction information is largely accurate, as are departmental and module handbooks.

159 The previous QAA report commended the systems for auditing University and departmental promotional literature; while the review team formed the view that current systems were operating reasonably well, it noted that some inconsistencies and out-of-date published material had been identified by students and would encourage UWL to strengthen its oversight with respect to the maintenance of departmental information. The team learnt that consideration was being given to establishing common templates for promotional material and took the view that this would be helpful.

160 The review team met with a wide range of students, studying in a number of departments including undergraduate; postgraduate, both taught and research; on-campus full and part-time; partnership students, including distance learners. Overall, the team formed the view that the information available to students was easily accessible, generally accurate, useful and fit for purpose.

## Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

161 The SED stated that, as well as updating its own website and printed material, information is supplied to, and published on, official higher education websites such as the Teaching Quality Information (TQI) and HERO sites, as well as unofficial sites like the Hotcourses Student Funding Guide. UWL's Freedom of Information publication scheme is available on the University website.

162 UWL assesses the effectiveness and impact of its published material through a new entrants' survey and focus groups and these consistently indicate that students use the website and the prospectus in making their choice to study at Lampeter. They also use sources such as UCAS web profiles, postgraduate websites and course listings. This was confirmed by the students who met the review team. Outcomes from the National Student Survey, complemented by internal student satisfaction surveys, are used by UWL in for promotional purposes.

163 As a result of its sampling of published information, and from what it heard from students, the review team formed the view that overall reliance can be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of information published in various formats by UWL.

164 The review team concluded that the University is addressing its obligations under HEFCW's document *Teaching Quality Information (TQI) Requirements for Higher Education in Wales (HEFCW W04/05HE)*.

# Findings

## Findings

165 An institutional review of the University of Wales, Lampeter (UWL or the University) was undertaken during the week 21 to 25 May 2007. The purpose of the review was to provide public information on the quality of the University's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility for the standards of its awards. This section of the report summarises the findings of the review. It concludes by identifying features of good practice that emerged, and recommendations to UWL for enhancing current practice.

### The effectiveness of institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

166 The UWL is in the process of amending its own Charter and Statutes as it accepts the devolved responsibility for these from the University of Wales (UW). The University is continuing to operate using the UW regulations and plans to revise these on a progressive basis, as each area which they cover is reviewed. The review team considered that UWL should undertake and complete this review as soon as possible to ensure it has a set of policies and procedures in place to support effective institutional oversight for the management of quality for its programmes and awards, aspects of which are highlighted in this report.

167 The University has up-dated, in December 2006 and February 2007 respectively, its Quality Assurance and Learning Manual (QALM) and the Quality Manual for Collaborative Arrangements (QMCA). These documents, approved by the Senate Executive Board (SEB), make clear the similarity of quality assurance requirements for internal and collaborative provision. The review team would encourage the UWL to monitor the impact of these documents and to take into consideration the purpose of reference points, in particular the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)* and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)/*Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (*CQFW), and to reflect on its own practices, taking any steps to ensure that appropriate changes are introduced.

168 The Senate is the academic authority of the University and, since 2004-05, has discharged its responsibility for quality assurance through delegation, in particular to the SEB. Heads of department are responsible for the quality assurance of programmes within their departments. The minutes of departmental meetings remain within the Department as they are not required by the University committees, or by the monthly Heads of department Meeting that is chaired by the Dean. Similarly, the Heads of Department Meeting minutes are not required to be reported to the SEB. The review team concluded that the information available to the University's main committee for quality assurance, the SEB, was limited by this lack of reporting, and the team considered it essential that the institution establishes deliberative structures and management systems that ensure effective and consistent institutional oversight and management of quality for its programmes and awards.

169 Responsibility for the implementation of quality assurance procedures, including collaborative provision, resides with the academic departments and is monitored by SEB. However, SEB does not always receive all minutes associated with the processes and often receives only composite reports on many of the quality processes. It was unclear to the team as to how the SEB could discharge its responsibility and maintain effective and consistent oversight of the completeness of the quality procedures with these requirements. Reports provided to the SEB for course approval panels (CAP) were not comprehensive in their coverage of the requirements as detailed in the QALM. There was no indication within the minutes of the SEB that documentation introduced for the processes outlined within the quality manuals, and approved by SEB, have been considered against the Academic Infrastructure. The review team concluded that the lack of evidence of the effective discharge of SEB's responsibilities had

the potential to put quality at risk, and led the team to consider it essential that the University addresses these matters to ensure the effective management of quality.

170 The review team concluded that UWL makes extensive use of external representation to support its quality processes. External commentary is required for all new programme and/or module approvals. In its review of the documentary evidence provided, the team was not able to confirm the extent to which the process was comprehensive in its coverage of the requirements for the 'Programme approval procedures' detailed in the QALM, as the CAP reports did not reference these aspects. The requirement that the external assessor must confirm that conditions set as an outcome of the CAP had been met before the SEB would confirm the programme's approval, was limited. The team saw modules that had been approved within the CAP process, where descriptors for modules, offered simultaneously at both higher education levels 2 and 3, did not differentiate learning outcomes by level. The team was also concerned that in programme approval they were unable to find robust and consistent evidence of a confirmation process addressing conditions attached to programme approval so that significant issues might be over looked. Furthermore, the team was concerned that the variable quality of contribution from external experts had the potential to put quality at risk. The team considered it essential that the institution addresses these matters to ensure the effective management of quality.

171 Departments have primary responsibility for managing collaborative provision and the recently introduced QMCA contains little guidance about the management of partnerships at institutional level. The division of responsibility for collaborative provision between departments, the SEB and the Senior Management Team, together with the lack of formal reporting procedures, does not provide a comprehensive overview of the completeness of requirements associated with the University's collaborative provision. The team concluded that some aspects of the University's management of partnerships put quality at risk. The team accepted that new quality assurance procedures for collaborative provision are now in place, but was not convinced that implementation was proceeding with due urgency. The team considered it essential that as the University reviews its capacity to coordinate and oversee partnership activity at institutional level so it can take full corporate responsibility for collaborative provision.

## The effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards

172 UWL regards its external examiners as the basis for confidence in its academic standards, and as the key external dimension of its quality assurance procedures. Indeed, because these examiners are also frequently used in the programme and module approval processes, they often provide the only external viewpoint on a programme and its assessment. The review team found that external examiner reports generally express full confidence in the University's management of academic standards and confirm that students' achievements are comparable with those in similar programmes at other UK universities. However, the team also found significant variability in the content of reports, noting that the report format provided by the University for its external examiners does not require them to compare standards with those of other institutions. In view of its very high level of dependence on external examiners, the team considered it advisable that the University should revise the structure of its external examiners' reports so as to establish minimum expectations in line with the *Code of practice.*

173 Heads of departments respond to external examiners' reports, and follow-up actions are monitored through Examining Boards; however, since these Boards' minutes are retained in departments, the institution has no transparent or direct means of monitoring actions taken in response to its external examiners. External examiners' reports are read by the Registrar and Secretary who draws the attention of departments to matters which

require particular attention, and also produces summaries for SEB of 'general' points raised in the reports. Nevertheless, the review team found evidence that these monitoring mechanisms were not always effective in detecting significant matters in external examiners' reports and reporting them at institutional level. The team considered UWL should ensure that external examiners' reports are addressed and given full weight at all appropriate levels, in particular ensuring that SEB, as the highest institutional academic authority, is able to oversee academic standards of departments and partner institutions. The team considered it essential to address these matters in order to ensure effective and consistent institutional oversight and management of standards for its programmes and awards.

174 UWL's assessment policies and procedures have been strengthened recently through the adoption of its Academic Regulations, which apply to all of its Campus-based and collaborative provision. The review team concluded that staff, students and external examiners will all benefit from the greater clarity and consistency which these regulations will increasingly provide; however, the team also encourages UWL to review the regulations and consider additions, such as assessment criteria differentiated by academic levels, and guidance on the use of *viva voce* examinations for undergraduate awards. The team found that assessment feedback to students is variable in timeliness and quality, and considered it advisable that the University establishes and implements institutional systems that ensure effective provision of feedback to students on their assessed work.

175 The University makes limited use, at institutional and departmental levels, of progression and achievement statistics in its management of standards and quality. The review team encourages the institution to make more systematic use of these data, for example, to explore the performance of widening participation students and to inform enhancement of their learning experience, and to compare campus-based and collaborative provision.

176 The review team found that the management of standards and quality at UWL emphasises the responsibilities of departments. This is marked particularly by the absence of reporting from departmental committees to SEB, and from Examining Boards to the Registry. Departments also have a high level of responsibility in the management of collaborative partnerships. On the basis of the evidence available, the team concluded that in these and other areas SEB, as the highest academic authority in the University, is not able to exercise sufficient or consistent oversight of the programmes and awards for which it is responsible; nor is it able to ensure that timely action is taken, across all departments, in response to institutional initiatives. The team noted, following the devolution of authority from the UW to the member institutions in 2006, UWL is reviewing its constitution, polices and systems in order to secure itself as an awarding institution in its own right. The team considered that UWL should complete this review as soon as possible to ensure that it has an internally consistent set of polices and procedures in place to support the effective institutional oversight and management of standards for its programmes and awards.

177 UWL has a large and complex range of collaborative provision, and requires all partner institutions to use the University's policies and procedures for securing the standards of awards. The review team found evidence that the University's external examining system is applied effectively in collaborative provision. Departments inform partner institutions of the University's requirements clearly and comprehensively, and give them effective support. However, the team was concerned to find that memoranda of agreement were not in place for all collaborative partnerships, and that the University's reporting structures did not always make the institution aware, at the highest levels, of serious issues in collaborative provision. Moreover, the team also found that a lack of externality in the partnership approval process had been noted by the University, but considered that this issue had not been addressed effectively. The team concluded

that it is essential that the University should take urgent steps to ensure effective oversight of collaborative provision at institutional level to ensure that all partnerships are secure and sustainable.

## The effectiveness of institutional procedures for supporting learning

178 The University provides a range of services supporting learning. The library, University Computing Services and Media Centre with Reprographics operate against annually updated service level agreements and this arrangement has enabled the University to improve the quality of support it provides for learning. The University systematically monitors student satisfaction through annual student satisfaction surveys which are being used to inform service development. The review team concluded that the management and funding of learning resources had undergone significant recent improvement, in line with UWL's strategic aims.

179 Alongside those resources directly related to learning, there is a range of other complimentary student support services including those provided under the aegis of the Student Support Office. Students spoke highly of this central support. The review team concluded that there was a comprehensive institutional infrastructure provided to address a wide range of individual student circumstances. This was identified as an example of good practice.

180 Improving access for under-represented groups is supported through the Widening Access Office and a wide range of initiatives are delivered by UWL. Some of these initiatives are longstanding and run collaboratively with other regional higher and further education providers. The review team heard evidence of individuals who had benefited greatly from these initiatives and considered that the effective and enthusiastic implementation of University strategy in this area, supported by coherent institutional oversight, was an example of good practice.

181 All students are allocated a personal tutor. The precise nature of the academic support provided to students varies according to the department with which they are registered and the nature of the programme that they are following. One characteristic of the curriculum at UWL is considerable flexibility, both in terms of the modular mix that is possible and the rate at which students may take credits within a given academic year. While the review team heard that advice and support was normally available, the team was concerned that some students were able to exceed the normal credit level and struggle to complete their studies. The team was also concerned about workloads between terms where there were particular modular pathways to follow for certain joint degree programme titles. In conclusion, the team considered it advisable for UWL to review this area so as to enable students to make module choices that provide balanced and realistic workloads and meet the requirements of the awards for which they are registered.

182 The 1999 quality audit report advised the University to consider the improvement of its staff development provision. The review team noted there had been a noticeable increase in staff development provision, including the validation of a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching (PGCHET). However, at the time of the review, there was still a lack of institutional oversight of the totality of staff development provision and the team urges the University to take cognisance of all its activities within a systematic staff development framework.

## The use made by the institution of the Academic Infrastructure

183 UWL expects departments to make use of the FHEQ, although UWL's quality and assurance procedures take a variable approach to its use. Reference to the FHEQ is not required in course documents for the validation of new programmes; however, department self-evaluations for Quinquennial Review are expected to make reference to it. There are examples of effective practice, particularly in connection with collaborative provision. The review team considered that, as the University continues to review and develop

programmes and modules, it takes a more considered and reflective approach to its practice in relation to the FHEQ. Areas for particular attention include the differentiation of module specifications and generic assessment criteria. The team found that more extensive and considered use is made of subject benchmark statements for the development and review of programmes, and in some cases this use is explicitly referenced in programme specifications.

184 All recently approved courses in the University and its partner institutions are defined in programme specifications as part of the validation process. Some departments have also produced them for courses already in approval, but four departments have not yet completed this process. There is no institutional template or model for programme specifications. The review team found that the University has not met the expectations for the need for programme specifications in a timely or concerted manner. A University standard format for module descriptors is used; examples of such descriptors seen by the team were variable in their content. The team was concerned to see that, in descriptors of some modules delivered at more than one academic level, intended learning outcomes and assessments were not clearly differentiated, and the team considered it advisable that the University ensures that the intended learning outcomes and assessments in module descriptors are appropriate to the level or levels at which the module is specified.

185 The SED, and internal documents seen by the review team, emphasised the roles of departments in what UWL calls 'compliance' with the *Code of practice*. The University asks departments, through the annual departmental quality audit, to affirm that their quality procedures comply with the *Code,* though this process is not assured at institutional level. The team found that, particularly in connection with collaborative provision, some departments make explicit and structured use of the *Code* and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure. The team considered that the University's capacity for institutional oversight of the use of the Academic Infrastructure is constrained by the limitations of its reporting and monitoring arrangements. The team concluded that although quality manuals and procedures are informed by the Academic Infrastructure, there is a lack of evidence that the institution has considered the purpose of the reference points, has reflected on its own practice, and has taken or is taking necessary steps to introduce appropriate changes.

### The utility of the SED as an illustration of the institution's capacity to reflect upon its own strengths and limitations, and to act on these to enhance quality and standards

186 The SED provided a commentary on the developments within the University and gave an overview of the academic organisation in place, with an explanation of changes that have occurred during the preceding years. The review team found the SED accurate and, while it identified some areas of strength and limitation, largely descriptive rather than providing evidence and analysis of the impact of recent changes to structures, policies and processes.

### Commentary on the institution's intentions for the enhancement of quality and standards

187 The SED makes clear that a strategic aim for UWL is the enhancement of the student experience. The quality assurance documentation approved by the SEB is viewed by senior managers as central to the achievement of this aim. Although recently introduced, the evaluation of the QALM and the QMCA is seen as the process through which actions will be identified for further enhancement. The appointment of a Staff Development Advisor and the formation of an Advisory Group on Professional Development demonstrates a commitment to staff development within UWL. This, together with the approval of the PGCHET programme that is being delivered in collaboration with other universities in Wales, confirms the intention to enhance the quality of learning and teaching for staff. The University

intends to develop greater flexibility in the delivery of programmes and offer alternative learning experiences for its students. Involvement in the Higher Education Academy's Benchmarking of e-Learning in UK Higher Education should assist in the development of its distance-learning support for students.

## Reliability of information

188 The University's published information is normally made available in English only and is accurate and useful for prospective and current students alike, whether on or off-campus.

189 The University meets the requirements of HEFCW's circular *Teaching Quality Information (TQI) Requirements for Higher Education in Wales (HEFCW W04/05HE)*. The team found that it could be confident in the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information published by the University in various formats.

## Features of good practice

190 The following features of good practice were noted:

i effective and enthusiastic implementation of widening participation initiatives (paragraph 125)

ii a comprehensive range of centrally provided student support (paragraph 136).

## Recommendations for action

191 Recommendation for action that the review team considers essential:

i establish deliberative structures and management systems that ensure effective and consistent institutional oversight and management of quality and standards for its programmes and awards (paragraphs 27, 32, 39, 41, 43, 45, 55, 64 and 65, 68 and 69, 76, 140 and 141, 144 and 145, and 150).

192 Recommendations for action that the review team considers advisable:

i ensure that intended learning outcomes and assessments in module descriptors are appropriate to the level or levels at which the module is specified (paragraphs 40, 41, and 71)

ii establish and implement institutional systems that ensure timely and effective provision of feedback to students on their assessed work (paragraphs 56 and 58)

iii revise the structure of external examiner reports so as to establish minimum expectations in line with the *Code of practice,* published by QAA (paragraphs 62 and 67)

iv enable students to make module choices that provide balanced and realistic workloads and meet the requirements of the awards for which they are registered (paragraphs 127 to 130).

193 Recommendation for action that the review team considers desirable:

i review the ways in which external assessors are informed of their role in programme approval and clarify their reporting requirements (paragraphs 46 and 48).

# Appendix

## The University of Wales, Lampeter's, response to the institutional review report

The University of Wales, Lampeter is pleased that the report acknowledges that external examiner reports generally express full confidence in the University's management of academic standards and confirm that students' achievements are comparable with those in similar programmes at other UK universities. The University is also pleased that its arrangements for student support and its implementation of widening participation and access initiatives have been singled out for praise and that its published information is accurate and effective and meets the obligations of the Teaching Quality Information Requirements for Higher Education.

The University is committed to the continuous enhancement of its quality assurance arrangements. Significant developments have already taken place in response to the changed status of the University of Wales, and further development was planned at the time of the review visit. The reliance which the University has placed hitherto on its established reporting lines, regulations and structures, developed within the framework of its membership of the federal University of Wales, is no longer sufficient. The University recognises the need to strengthen its deliberative structures and management systems, in order to ensure effective and consistent oversight and management of quality and standards. The advice of the review team is therefore timely.

As part of the University's progressive development and enhancement of quality assurance systems and arrangements, agreement had been reached, prior to receipt of the review report, on examining boards reporting to Senate Executive Board before the promulgation of results; improving the briefing of external examiners; clarifying the arrangements for the review of partnerships; and taking additional measures to share good practice in relation to assessment, including the timeliness of feedback to students. The Senate Executive Board has been fully engaged in responding to the review report, and further actions have been proposed to deal with all of the report's recommendations. The University has noted the need to ensure that its written records fully demonstrate the extent of its engagement with the academic infrastructure including the QAA Code of practice.

The University is grateful to the review team for the identification of aspects of good practice which merit extending, including effective and helpful partnership handbooks, valuable staff development provision, and two effective models for programme specifications which could be drawn upon to develop a single model. The University is introducing new mechanisms for capturing and sharing other examples of good practice.

It is gratifying that the report recognises the serious consideration given to the views of students, the improving relationships and engagement with alumni, and the extensive use of external representation to support the University's quality processes. The University will continue to secure appropriate external guidance and advice in developing its quality assurance and enhancement arrangements and in responding to the report's recommendations.