

University of Nottingham

MARCH 2005

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 England and Northern Ireland this process is known as institutional audit. QAA operates similar but separate processes in Scotland and Wales.

The purpose of institutional audit

The aims of institutional audit 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; and
- exercising their legal powers to award degrees in a proper manner.

Judgements

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

- the **confidence** that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the 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 **broad confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence** and are accompanied by examples of good practice and recommendations for improvement.

Nationally agreed standards

Institutional audit 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 the 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 audit process

Institutional audits 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 audit are:

- a preliminary visit by QAA to the institution nine months before the audit visit;
- a self-evaluation document submitted by the institution four months before the audit visit;
- a written submission by the student representative body, if they have chosen to do so, four months before the audit visit;
- a detailed briefing visit to the institution by the audit team five weeks before the audit visit;
- the audit visit, which lasts five days;
- the publication of a report on the audit team's judgements and findings 20 weeks after the audit visit.

The evidence for the audit

In order to obtain the evidence for its judgement, the audit 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 audit team also gathers evidence by focusing on examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work using 'audit trails'. These trails may focus on a particular programme or programmes offered at that institution, when they are known as a 'discipline audit trail'. In addition, the audit team may focus on a particular theme that runs throughout the institution's management of its standards and quality. This is known as a 'thematic enquiry'.

From 2004, institutions will be required to publish information about the quality and standards of their programmes and awards in a format recommended in document 02/15 *Information on quality and standards in higher education* published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The audit team reviews progress towards meeting this requirement.

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Institutional audit

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Linney Direct

Adamsway

Mansfield

NG18 4FN

Tel 01623 450788

Fax 01623 450629

Email qaa@linneydirect.com

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Summary

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of Nottingham (the University) from 7 to 11 March 2005 to carry out an institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of its awards.

To arrive at its conclusions the audit team spoke to members of staff throughout the University, to current students, and read a wide range of documents relating to the way the University 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 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 awards. It is about making sure that appropriate teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them.

In institutional audit, both academic standards and academic quality are reviewed.

Outcome of the audit

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

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

Features of good practice

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

- the responsive approach to student representation which promotes active student involvement in University processes at all levels in the institution
- the contribution of the Staff and Educational Development Unit to the sustenance and continuous improvement of the quality of educational provision across the University's campuses

- the comprehensive, accurate and accessible information provided to students including the Student Portal which allows seamless access to a variety of e-learning resources.

Recommendations for action

The audit team also recommends that the University should consider further action in a number of areas to ensure that the academic quality and standards of the awards it offers are maintained.

The team advises the University to:

- establish and maintain effective monitoring of assessment schemes for joint honours programmes, with particular reference to consistency in the regulations for borderline classifications and the coordination of the scheduling of examination boards where the results of joint honours students are considered
- in developing its policies and procedures for periodic review and audit, ensure the consistent application and implementation of systematic and uniform requirements for the inclusion of independent advisers external to the University in the membership of all panels
- ensure that formal agreements for the operation of collaborative arrangements preclude serial arrangements for provision leading to awards of the University, and also include a means for the University to approve all information produced by collaborative partners for publicity purposes.

It would be desirable, given the planned expansion of provision in overseas campuses, for the University to keep under review the continuing appropriateness of its policies and procedures for the management of the quality and standards of its awards offered through such arrangements.

Outcomes of discipline audit trails: Biology; English Studies; Pharmacy; Politics; Mathematical Sciences, and Mechanical, Materials and Manufacturing Engineering

The standard of student achievement in the programmes is appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The quality of learning opportunities available to students is suitable for programmes of study leading to the awards.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings, the audit team also investigated the use made by the University of the Academic Infrastructure that 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 audit suggest that the University has responded appropriately to the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements, programme specifications and the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA, noting that it is not yet in full alignment with the section of the *Code of practice* on collaborative provision

In due course, the institutional audit process will include a check on the reliability of information set published by institutions in the format recommended in the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) documents, *Information on quality and standards in higher education* (HEFCE 02/15) and *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance* (HEFCE 03/51). The draft report will state that, at the time of the audit, the University was alert to the requirements set out in HEFCE 02/15 and to the implications of HEFCE 03/51, and was moving in an appropriate manner to fulfil its responsibilities in this respect.

Main report

Main report

1 An institutional audit of the University of Nottingham (the University) was undertaken during the week commencing 7 March 2005. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the University's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility for its awards.

2 The audit 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 England (HEFCE), the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) and Universities UK (UUK), and has been endorsed by the Department for Education and Skills. For institutions in England, it replaces the previous processes of continuation audit, undertaken by QAA at the request of UUK and SCOP, and universal subject review, undertaken by QAA on behalf of HEFCE, as part of the latter's statutory responsibility for assessing the quality of education that it funds.

3 The audit checked the effectiveness of the University's procedures for establishing and maintaining the standards of its academic awards; for reviewing and enhancing the quality of the programmes of study leading to those awards, and for publishing reliable information. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with HEFCE, SCOP and UUK, the audit included consideration of examples of institutional processes at work at the level of the programme, through discipline audit trails (DATs). The scope of the audit encompassed all of the University's provision in the UK and overseas, including collaborative arrangements leading to its awards.

Section 1: Introduction: the University of Nottingham

The institution and its mission

4 The University was established in 1948 on the award of a Royal Charter but traces its origins to the opening of the Adult School in 1789 and the University College, Nottingham in 1881. The University operates from four UK campuses and 'many other centres in and around Nottingham'. The 330-acre main campus was opened in 1928, and in 1947 agriculture was added to the curriculum when the Midland College of Agriculture at Sutton Bonington merged with the University College. The Jubilee Campus opened in 1999 and in 2000 a Graduate Entry Medical School opened in Derby. At the time of the audit, the University was planning

the opening of a Veterinary School in September 2006. The University has one overseas campus in Malaysia and is developing a campus in China.

5 The University has full degree-awarding powers at all levels. It offers first degrees as single and joint honours as well as major/minor combinations and a scheme of interim awards. At postgraduate level there are over 150 taught master's programmes, and MPhil and PhD research degrees.

6 In the academic year 2003-04, there were 30,105 students: undergraduate registrations totalled 24,019 of which 19,115 were full-time and 4,904 were part-time. 2,593 of undergraduate registrations were classified as international. Postgraduate taught students numbered 3,815 of which 1,355 were part-time. There were 2,271 research students of which 602 were part-time. International enrolments at postgraduate level numbered 2,317.

7 There are 32 Schools in six Faculties: Arts; Law and Social Sciences; Education; Science; Engineering; Medicine and Health Sciences. For quality assurance purposes, the faculties are grouped into two academic boards: Humanities, and Science and Engineering, and a Faculty Board for Medicine and Health Sciences.

8 The University's chief academic and administrative officer is the Vice-Chancellor who is supported by six Pro-Vice Chancellors. The Pro-Vice Chancellors are the line managers of the heads of school and have generic responsibility for policy matters, for example, research, staffing and international matters. Pro-Vice Chancellors normally serve for four years.

9 The University's mission statement is: 'The University of Nottingham is committed to excellence in the advancement and communication of knowledge. It aims to advance knowledge by undertaking research of international standing across a wide range of disciplines and to communicate knowledge by:

- providing a rich and varied learning experience for students in a research-led environment, by staff at the forefront of their discipline
- equipping students with a curiosity-driven and deep understanding of their subject, a critical approach and skills relevant to their future careers
- encouraging students to think internationally through their academic subjects and, whenever possible, by undertaking study abroad
- working with regional, national and international partners to apply the outcome of its research and enhance its teaching

In addition, the University aims to:

- be international in character and focus
- attract, retain, motivate and support staff of the highest quality, including those with an international perspective
- be a welcoming, responsive and developing institution, which contributes to economic and social change and promotes fairness, equal opportunity, diversity and social responsibility
- harness and enhance new technologies and information systems in research, teaching and management.'

10 The University does not have extensive collaborative provision, having determined in 1997 that 'collaboration as expressed through validation and other similar activity [was] no longer appropriate as a strategic goal'. At the time of the audit, the sole validated provision was with St John's College, a local theological college. The University has a growing amount of overseas provision which involves the delivery of University courses by University staff, including an MBA programme in Singapore and a Doctor of Education Programme in Hong Kong. As noted, the University has a campus in Malaysia and, at the time of the audit was planning the establishment of a campus in China. There is also a small number of joint programmes and joint award agreements. Consideration of the University's approach to collaborative provision was embedded within the present audit. Further detail of the University's approach to collaborative and overseas provision may be found at paragraphs 119 to 124.

Background information

11 The published information for this audit included:

- the information available on the University's website
- the report of the previous quality audit of the University, undertaken in 2000
- the reports of HEFCE and QAA reviews of provision at the subject level.

12 The University provided QAA with the following documents:

- the self-evaluation document (SED)
- discipline self-evaluation documents (DSEDs) for the six areas selected for DATs.

13 The University also supplied the audit team with CDs containing documents cited as evidence in the SED and the University's Quality Manual. The team was given ready access to the University's website and

intranet and to a range of documentation relating to the DATs, the latter including samples of student work.

The audit process

14 Following a preliminary meeting at the University in June 2004, QAA confirmed that six DATs would be conducted during the audit visit. QAA received the SED in November 2004 and the DSEDs in January 2005. The audit team's selection of DATs was Biology, English Studies, Mathematical Sciences, Mechanical, Materials and Manufacturing Engineering, Pharmacy, and Politics. The DSEDs were written for the purposes of the audit.

15 The audit team visited the University from 25 to 27 January 2005 for the purpose of exploring with the Vice-Chancellor, 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 audit and developed a programme of meetings for the audit visit, which was agreed with the University.

16 At the preliminary meeting, the students of the University were invited, through their Students' Union, to submit a separate document expressing views on the student experience at the University and identifying any matters of concern or commendation with respect to the quality of programmes and the standards of awards. They were also invited to give their views on the level of representation afforded to them and on the extent to which their views were taken into account by the University.

17 In November 2004, the Students' Union submitted to QAA a students' written submission (SWS). The Students' Union indicated that the document had been shared with appropriate University staff. There were no matters that the audit team was required to treat with any level of confidentiality greater than that normally applying to the audit process. The team is grateful to the students for preparing this document to support the audit.

18 The audit visit took place from 7 to 11 March 2005 and involved further meetings with staff and students of the University, both at institutional level and in relation to the DATs. The audit team was Professor H Chase, Professor A Downton, Professor B Gower, Professor W Henderson, Mrs R Jowett, Mr N McLaughlin-Cook, Professor D Punter, auditors, and Ms G Simpson, audit secretary. The audit was coordinated for QAA by Mrs S Patterson, Assistant Director, Reviews Group.

Developments since the previous academic quality audit

19 The University was subject to continuation audit by QAA in 2000. In the SED, the University expressed the view that there had been no major structural changes in University organisation and management since that audit that would have a bearing on the present audit. The SED pointed to the aim of the University since the previous audit 'to consolidate its position by effective management of its quality and standards, and enhancement of its provision'.

20 The report of the continuation audit commended the University in particular for:

- the quality of its communications with staff and students, particularly the very effective use which it made of the web
- the University Quality Audit (UQA), including its strong student participation and the training which the University provide[d] for auditors
- the robust systems which had been put in place to review sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA, in order to facilitate adherence within the University
- the activities of the University's survey unit
- the quality of student support services
- the management of probation and the development of probationers
- its commitment to the development of its staff and the effective means it use[d] for providing this
- its provision for the enhancement of teaching across the University, including systematic central institutional support including the giving of the Lord Dearing Awards
- the close and effective collaboration between the Students' Union and the University.

21 The report of the continuation audit asked the University to consider the advisability of:

- extending the involvement and role of staff from other faculties in the Faculty Board of the Medical School
- strengthening the scope of the annual course review and its required submission to academic board
- introducing coherent monitoring and review, in line with the present mechanisms for internal audit established within the institution, of the efficacy of its evolving quality assurance systems, including the level of administrative support

given to heads of schools to support their key role in the process of quality assurance

- clarification by the Quality Manual of the procedures for the monitoring and review of courses within the University's arrangements for collaborative provision, and means of ensuring that the outcomes are reported centrally on an annual basis.
- 22 The report of the continuation audit also asked the University to consider the desirability of:
- requiring external examiners to comment on a wider range of assessment than examination work
 - systematic integration of professional and statutory body reports into the University's quality assurance systems
 - considering, during the impending review of the curriculum, how modules at different levels within the University's undergraduate qualifications framework reliably assure progression in student learning
 - timely and effective implementation of the new pastoral policy to ensure the achievement of minimum standards for the provision of tutors for students on taught courses
 - requiring all postgraduates with teaching responsibilities to be given training in the support of student learning
 - continuing its efforts to inform staff that the quality of teaching is highly regarded in decisions affecting promotion
 - centrally exercising more direct oversight of the material produced in its name which describes courses leading to awards of the University, and to consider more overt monitoring of the material produced by schools, particularly during the annual course review process
 - increasing the specified minimum frequency of meetings of the staff-student consultative committees and ensuring that there is effective monitoring of the operation of these committees within stated University policy on an annual basis.

23 Actions taken in response to the continuation audit report include provision for membership on the Faculty Board for Medicine and Health Sciences of two nominees from schools from other faculties; the development of a more formal system of annual course monitoring; a review of committee structures; revised procedures for the monitoring of all programmes; and a review of academic and pastoral support resulting in a revised policy. The University monitors school-based materials only through scrutiny of programme specifications and has decided to retain

the minimum requirements for meetings of student staff consultative committees at three per year.

24 Since the continuation audit, the University has participated in eight reviews by QAA at the subject level, the outcomes of which were all satisfactory. Positive features identified in the reviews include high-quality printed and electronic learning resources; excellent progression and achievement of students; effective staff development and, as exemplary practice in the review of the History provision, student-led assessed seminars.

25 In 2002, QAA audited the collaborative arrangement between the University and the National University of Singapore for joint delivery of an LLM International Commercial Law. The report highlighted a number of areas for consideration in the University's approach to collaborative provision (see paragraph 122).

26 The audit team concluded that in the main actions in response to the recommendations from audit and review had been appropriate and timely. The team noted that there was still some work to be undertaken in the area of collaborative provision (see paragraphs 65 and 66).

Section 2: The audit investigations: institutional processes

The institution's view as expressed in the SED

27 The University describes itself as a highly devolved organisation and, according to the SED, assures the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards by relying on 'the high quality and commitment of its academic and support staff and of students' who are expected to 'exercise academic judgement on the basis of relevant evidence, guided by appropriate policies and supported by effective procedures and systems'. The SED claimed that there was widespread commitment in the University to the effective management of quality and standards.

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

28 The Quality Manual is the main vehicle for informing academic staff and students about the University's policies and procedures for quality assurance. It contains the key policies and procedures in the areas of teaching, students' learning, assessment and support, and guidance on their implementation. The Quality Manual takes account

of the *Code of practice*, and users are assured that by following its guidance they will be implementing the *Code* in accordance with University policy. There is an institution-level periodic auditing process - the UQA (see paragraph 49) - which is used to monitor Schools' understanding of, and compliance with, the provisions of the Quality Manual.

29 At senior management level, two of the six Pro Vice-Chancellors have a direct role in the development of policy for quality assurance and standards. Each faculty normally has two vice-deans who play an important role in the management of quality and standards. Heads of school have explicit responsibilities for the maintenance of a high-quality learning environment for students and of the University's academic standards. Academic members of staff in schools share these devolved responsibilities for quality assurance and are expected to be personally committed to, and involved in, quality management, so that learning opportunities for students are enhanced. Students also are engaged in aspects of quality management. Representative officers of the Students' Union are involved in University-level discussions and are able to influence the development of quality assurance policy, and all students have an opportunity to contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the learning environment through their involvement in UQA as well as in the evaluation of modules and of those who teach them. Finally, academic staff and students are supported by an Academic Office which plays a central part in developing, maintaining and implementing the systems for managing academic quality and standards.

30 The statutes of the University invest its Senate with academic authority, including the power to award degrees, diplomas and certificates. The responsibilities of the Senate for academic standards and for the quality of the students' learning opportunities are discharged by two senior committees, the Teaching Committee and the Student Services Committee, which report to it on major policy developments. The Teaching Committee is chaired by a Pro Vice-Chancellor and is advised by five subcommittees: for taught courses; for research degrees; for recruitment and admissions, including widening participation; for collaborative courses; and for the oversight of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Both the Taught Courses Committee and the Research Degrees Committee advise the Teaching Committee on the development and implementation of policies for learning and teaching, and monitor the effectiveness of these policies. They are required by their terms of reference to act with particular regard

to student progression and achievement, academic standards, and quality of provision. In the case of the Taught Courses Committee, regard for the quality of provision includes 'the design of effective mechanisms for the approval of courses and modules and for their regular review'. The Collaborative Courses Committee (CCC) advises the Teaching Committee 'on matters of policy and criteria concerning partnerships with other educational and non-educational institutions which involve students, and with any matters concerning collaborative and off-campus award-bearing courses'. This includes ensuring 'that the standards and quality of such courses and awards are the same as equivalent courses and awards delivered on the University campuses'. The Recruitment and Admissions Committee advises the Teaching Committee on the University's Recruitment and Admissions Strategy, including the relation of admissions standards to widening participation. Formulation of the Widening Participation Strategy is the direct responsibility of Teaching Committee.

31 The Student Services Committee, chaired by a Pro Vice-Chancellor, is also a major committee of Senate. It is required to advise Senate on policies and strategies for the development of centrally provided support for students, including careers advice and provision for students with disabilities and to monitor the implementation of these policies and strategies. Its membership includes the heads of student support services, the University Senior Tutor, and the Students' Union welfare officer.

32 Following discussion and consultation regarding the role of faculty boards, the University decided in the academic year 1999-2000 to establish faculty-level academic boards for Humanities and for Science and Engineering. The academic boards superseded the faculty boards and have a specific responsibility to assure the quality and standards of academic provision in schools and to ensure consistency in the application of policy across schools. The Faculty Board for Medicine and Health Sciences was retained with the same remit as the academic boards, although the SED indicated that further work was required to integrate it into the University's academic board system. The three boards have subcommittees which consider reviews of programmes of study and proposals for new programmes. A review of the operation of academic boards led to clarification of their role in consideration of UQA reports. They now receive these reports, consider School responses to them, and provide a summary of the findings of the reports to the Taught Courses Committee and the Research Degrees Committee.

33 The statutes of the University state that the power of the Senate to award degrees, diplomas and certificates may be delegated, 'subject to subsequent report to the Senate', to the 'Undergraduate Studies Committee' or the 'Postgraduate Studies Committee' which, according to the SED, have been reconstituted as the Taught Courses Committee and the Research Degrees Committee respectively. Senate has recommended that the wording of the relevant statute be amended to reflect this change but the terms of reference of these reconstituted committees do not refer explicitly to this delegated power, and they require them to report to the Teaching Committee rather than to Senate.

34 In this connection, the audit team noted that the Quality Manual stated that the academic boards and the Faculty Board for Medicine and Health Sciences approved recommendations from examination boards for the award of degrees on behalf of Senate. It appeared to the team, from a reading of the Statutes, that the academic boards and the Faculty Board for Medicine and Health Sciences were only authorised to make recommendations for the award of degrees to Senate, or to the committees to which Senate had delegated its degree-awarding powers. The team also noted that the Teaching Committee's terms of reference stated that it had 'overall responsibility for the University's academic quality and standards, under delegated powers from Senate'. It was not clear to the team that the Statutes permitted the Senate to delegate such powers to that committee. Given the important role that the Teaching Committee performs, and the explicit statutory role of its subcommittees for taught courses and for research degrees, it appeared to the team that in this matter and in the area of the awarding of degrees the University might wish to consider the resolution of the discrepancies between its practice and the position indicated in the statutes.

35 The University's policies regarding the assessment of students are set out in the Quality Manual. A University of Nottingham Qualifications Framework has been developed to demonstrate that the University's qualifications are awarded consistently and in accordance with the guidance provided by *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The University requires that from the academic year 2005-06 all approved new courses should be in alignment with its Qualifications Framework.

36 The University has approved three methods for classifying undergraduate honours degrees, intended to reflect the marking traditions of

different subjects. Only those marks obtained after satisfactory completion of the first 'qualifying' year of study are taken into account; thereafter, schools may choose, within limits which have recently been narrowed, the weighting to be given to marks achieved in the second year (Part I), third year (Part II), and, where appropriate, fourth year (Part III), in calculating degree classifications. Borderlines for classification may vary between degrees and must be made explicit in programme specifications. The significance of a classified undergraduate degree of the University is not, therefore, entirely univocal, and the University has recognised the potential for inequitable treatment of students. While acknowledging that complete uniformity in rules for classifying degrees might not be appropriate, the audit team considered that greater consistency in the operation of the rules was needed to allow the University to demonstrate equity in the award of its classified degrees. The team noted progress in achieving greater consistency consequent upon consideration in 2003 by the academic boards of the lack of formal procedures for ensuring equity of treatment of students in the classification of degrees and the limited quality control above school level of recommendations for the award of degrees, and would encourage the University to continue its careful monitoring in this area.

37 The University has and is planning an increasing amount of provision delivered on overseas campuses. The University regards these campuses as part of the University, and as extensions of the activities of Schools. Given that the University's stated aim is 'to use appropriate means to ensure that standards, quality and learning opportunities are equivalent for all Nottingham awards, wherever and by whatever means they are delivered', the SED emphasised that the University's standard quality management arrangements 'applied equally' to its overseas provision as to its provision in the UK. In 2000, the University opened a campus in Malaysia that was the subject of a UQA in 2004. The University has recognised the complexity associated with operating overseas and has put in place additional measures to develop and monitor this activity.

38 At the time of the audit, the University was working on plans to open a campus in China and in recognition of the particular complexity of operating educational provision in China Senate debated the overall plans for the academic provision. A special project group, including the Head of Process, Quality and Standards, is overseeing the operational establishment of the campus. The SED noted that the University would 'keep under review whether

additional measures or amended practices [were] required to assure the quality and standards of its awards in China'. The University has scheduled a UQA for its provision in China in its forward planning for UQAs.

39 As noted, the University does not engage in collaborative provision involving the validation of programmes taught and examined by another institution, except in the case of St John's College, and it does not authorise the delivery of a whole or part of a University programme by a partner organisation

40 In discussions with staff and students, the audit team found evidence to support the claim that responsibilities for the assurance of quality and standards were widely shared. The guidance provided in the Quality Manual is used and heeded, and there are systems to identify and remedy any significant divergence between the policies and procedures it contains and the practices followed at school level.

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

41 The University regards its Learning and Teaching Strategy as a key instrument for identifying and steering specific quality enhancement activities. According to the SED, it enables the University 'to respond to changing priorities and new areas of enhancement in a carefully planned and funded manner'. The aims of the strategy are, first, 'to encourage and disseminate good and innovative practice in support of high quality learning and teaching' and, secondly, 'to develop learning and teaching practice in the context of increasing diversity'. In support of the first of these aims new technology is used to deliver materials, develop learning resources and support student learning. The second aim relates to the importance that the University attaches to the further development of an inclusive and flexible learning environment for all students, and to promoting fairness, equal opportunity, diversity and social responsibility. A Diversity Taskforce has consulted different groups of students about inclusiveness and is developing good practice guidelines and proposing developments in areas such as induction for undergraduates, approaches to learning and teaching and curriculum development.

42 The Learning and Teaching Strategy is overseen, on behalf of the Teaching Committee, by the Educational Development Advisory Group (EDAG), whose members have a responsibility for delivering aspects of the strategy. Funding for the strategy helps to support the work of the Institute for Research into Learning and Teaching in Higher

Education; a continuing project on the development of progress files for students; and, the further development of an electronic personal and academic record system for students. To disseminate good practice in teaching and learning, a taskforce is developing a web-based resource containing information about approaches to teaching and including demonstrations of these approaches by the University's lecturers.

43 The audit team noted that the EDAG monitored the effectiveness of the Learning and Teaching Strategy by considering the outcomes of the specific projects undertaken to implement it. The team formed the view that these projects had enabled the University to make progress in enhancing students' experience of learning. It also noted that some emphasis was being placed on the role of the Learning and Teaching Strategy in supporting the development of professional standards for those involved in the provision of teaching and learning. In the view of the team, this emphasis should help the University to make further progress in enabling all students to benefit from its intentions for enhancement.

Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

Programme approval

44 According to the SED, proposals for new courses originate in schools, where academic staff design curricula and draft submission documents. Proposals are submitted to the undergraduate or postgraduate programme committee of the relevant academic board, which have delegated authority from that academic board to approve new courses. A programme specification is required, as is a 'curriculum map' to help those considering the proposal to decide whether it satisfies the requirements of relevant external bodies and accords with relevant subject benchmark statements. Although the FHEQ is not referred to specifically in the procedure used in considering proposals for new courses, the introduction of the University's Qualifications Framework is intended to ensure that it is taken into account (see paragraph 67). Approval processes are overseen by the Courses Office which ensures that questions about the viability of a new course, or about the availability of resources to support it, are addressed and answered, and which advises programme committees accordingly.

45 In the view of the audit team, the use of the University's Qualifications Framework will strengthen the assurances that the academic standards of new courses, and the quality of the learning opportunities

available to students, are appropriate. Those assurances are provided by programme committees to their academic boards in the form of reports which enable the boards to monitor and review the powers that they have delegated to these committees. The team noted, further, that at an institutional level, an annual report on the approval of new courses was provided to the Taught Courses Committee. It did not appear that there was a formal means by which the Senate, which has the overriding responsibility to set, maintain and assure standards, is able to monitor systematically the exercise of course approval powers. The team formed the view, therefore, that there is some scope for clarifying the responsibilities of the boards and committees involved in course approval, so that the basis of the Senate's confidence that its power to approve new courses is being used in the way it wishes can be made more secure.

Annual monitoring

46 Annual monitoring of courses is the responsibility of schools. Quantitative and qualitative indicators are used, including external examiners' reports and reviews of modules using student evaluations of modules and teaching. A quantitative data set (QDS) is provided for each School by the Policy and Planning Unit, enabling progression and completion data to be considered at school level. Schools prepare reports of the outcomes of annual monitoring and a statement of any actions to be taken in the light of the outcomes. These reports are for the information of the schools themselves and are only forwarded to academic boards or programme committees on request. Programme committees (or the equivalent) receive annually a summary of external examiners' reports and of responses to them. They also receive copies of the QDS for the relevant Schools, together with comments on those data sets by the Courses Office drawing attention to any matters that may require further consideration. In addition, the Taught Courses Committee receives a formal report from the Courses Office on the information provided to programme committees.

47 The SED indicated that the University considered that its method for annual monitoring was effective. It claimed that it ensured that risks to quality and/or standards were identified and remedied quickly. On the basis of information provided to support the DATs, confirmed by discussions with academic staff and students, the audit team was able to endorse this view.

Periodic review

48 The University uses two systems for reviewing provision on a periodic basis. In the first of these

systems, schools are required to undertake a review every five years of each course for which they are responsible. The principal purpose of course reviews is 'to give key stakeholders an opportunity to reflect on the development of a course, and for the school and University (through the academic boards) to ensure that the criteria which are applied when a course is first approved continue to be met'. The University's policy for course reviews stipulates that the panel undertaking a review must include a member who is external to the University. The outcome of a course review is a report which is based on a template and is submitted to the Courses Office. Course reviews are owned and operated by schools and normally course review reports are not considered or approved by academic boards.

49 The second system, UQA, takes place on a longer cycle with the aim of providing 'a systematic check on Schools' level of understanding of, and compliance with, the Quality Manual', and is an opportunity for the University to engage directly with schools' quality assurance procedures. It also has a role in quality enhancement in that it seeks to identify good practice which can be spread by the University and feed into a Good Practice Guide. UQA is overseen by a Steering Group which identifies a team consisting of experienced auditors from within the University, a representative of the Students' Union, and normally an independent auditor external to the University who has experience of quality assurance issues in a cognate discipline area. The work of the team is based on a Reflective and Evaluative Document prepared by the school being audited, and one day is set aside for meetings of the team with the head of school, academic staff, and students. The outcome of the process is a formal report which, together with the school's response, is considered by the appropriate academic board. The academic board may call for a follow-up report indicating action which has been taken to address any concerns indicated in the audit report. Summaries of the findings of each UQA are provided to the Taught Courses Committee and the Research Degrees Committee, identifying matters which these committees may need to consider in the formulation of University policy. Where a UQA report identifies opportunities for quality enhancement it is referred to the EDAG, and where a report draws attention to general matters concerning student support it is referred to the Student Services Committee.

50 The University uses the UQA process to provide periodic reviews not only of schools but also of broadly based activities, for example, the University's

campus in Malaysia, and of quality assurance procedures, such as those concerning the University's use of external examiners. It has also used this audit process to review its collaborative activity with St John's College (see paragraph 123).

51 In March 2001, the Quality Manual was updated to specify additional procedures for the operation of the provision in Malaysia and to indicate which of the standard procedures were not applicable. The University carried out a UQA of the campus in Malaysia in September 2004. The SED noted the expectation that 'the relevant Schools and local campus management' in Malaysia would 'act promptly on any recommendations' arising from the Malaysia UQA. The formal response to the UQA report addressed each recommendation and typically indicated that action would be completed by the academic year 2005-06. The response was considered by the Science and Engineering and Humanities Academic Boards in January 2005. A recommendation in the UQA report on the Malaysian campus was that 'for all overseas campus provision the University should make the nature of the relationship with the UK and the communication structure clear at inception'. In meetings, the audit team was informed that such issues had been clarified in relation to the China campus.

52 The University considers that its approach to course review, when coupled with UQA, is in alignment with the section of the *Code of practice* on programme approval, monitoring and review. It appeared to the audit team that, as course review was a school rather than institutional process, there was no provision for a formal central overview of the outcomes of course reviews. The team did note that the Courses Office and the Quality and Standards Team alerted the Taught Courses Committee to matters arising from course reviews which might have more general application. The SED pointed to UQA as a means for ensuring that 'course review had been undertaken properly'.

53 In commenting on the use of two systems for periodically reviewing the provision of teaching and learning in schools, the SED claimed that 'this duality of mechanisms provide[d] a comprehensive means of both enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and providing the institution with assurance regarding the maintenance of academic quality and standards'. In the view of the audit team, the University's approach to periodic review of its provision through the combination of UQA and course review has merit but does not provide a full central overview of quality and standards. Each of the mechanisms has advantages but also limitations.

While course review considers matters directly relevant to academic standards and to the quality of students' learning opportunities, its location at school level inhibits an impartial institutional overview and confirmation of the appropriateness of the quality and standards of the provision. UQA undertakes the valuable task of assessing the conformity of schools' practices with the guidance set out in the Quality Manual and promotes quality enhancement by identifying good practice; although it is an institutional-level process, the focus on audit activity does not enable it to provide the University with direct assurances about standards and quality. In reviewing and developing its approach to periodic review and audit, the University may wish to give particular attention to the extent to which UQA and course review together are able to provide comprehensive, reliable and impartial assurances about the quality of the University's programmes of study and about the standards of its awards.

External participation in internal review processes

54 The Quality Manual states that for course approval 'a School should seek guidance from appropriate external sources, eg accrediting bodies, and indicate this in the course submission documentation where applicable.' Evidence from the DATs confirmed that specialist external advice, from accrediting bodies and external examiners, was obtained and used in the development of proposals. The course submission document which is completed when a new course is proposed does not require that such external specialist advice be made available to the programme committee considering the proposal. Programme committees draw on the programme specifications and curriculum maps that accompany course submission documents in its consideration of the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities of a new course. The University may wish to consider whether the provision to programme committees of the external specialist advice obtained by schools might provide additional assurance of academic standards and quality.

55 External advisers are used in course review but there is no stipulation that the external advice be provided by a person with no current connection with the course. Schools are not required to seek faculty or institutional approval of nominations of external advisers and the names of the persons they appoint are not included in course review reports. The University is not, therefore, in a position to be assured that the external advice provided in course

reviews is independent and impartial. Accordingly, the audit team would advise that the University consider establishing a means whereby it can confirm the consistent application and implementation of the requirement that advice provided in course review be sought from independent advisers external to the University to promote additional confidence that the standards and quality of the courses under review are appropriate.

56 UQA draws on independent external advice for audits of quality assurance arrangements in schools. The UQA Handbook indicates that '[t]he external person appointed would be expected to provide subject expertise for the audit team, but would not be expected to act in an external examiner or course review type capacity'. The audit team noted that, in the UQA of the quality assurance arrangements of provision on the Malaysia Campus, independent external advice was not used. In discussions with members of the University, it was explained to the team that, because of the wide scope of that provision, and because its components would in due course be included in the audits of the schools responsible, it had not been judged appropriate to make use of such advice. The UQA of the provision at St John's College was also undertaken without using advice external to the University. Discussions with staff indicated that the University took the view that, because the College was not part of the University, and also because the audit panel included a subject specialist from the University, it was not necessary to include an advisor able to provide the University with an independent view. The team did not find these explanations altogether convincing.

57 In the SED, the University stated that UQA and course review needed to be seen as a 'duality' and that having a 'a measure of externality in both processes [gave] the University greater confidence that equal rigour was occurring in both processes and that they [were] each informed by expectations external to the University'. The audit team noted and endorses the view expressed in the SED that independent external advice offered a 'fresh perspective' and considers that the University's approach to review of its provision would benefit from a broadening of the use of external advice. Accordingly, the team advises the University, in developing its policies and procedures for periodic review and audit, to ensure the consistent application and implementation of systematic and uniform requirements for the inclusion of independent advisers external to the University in the membership of all panels.

External examiners and their reports

58 The University's policies and procedures in relation to external examiners are set out in the Quality Manual. External examiners are required to review and approve draft examination papers, moderate a sample of scripts, conduct oral examinations where necessary and attend examination boards at which the final assessment of candidates is considered. In addition, they are required to provide an annual written report in a standard format on the standards of University awards in relation to their experience of equivalent awards at other institutions, and to the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements, and University programme specifications; they also provide a final summary report at the end of their period of appointment. In response to the report of the 2000 continuation audit, the University now asks external examiners to comment on a wider range of areas in their reports, including curriculum aims and design, assessment and examination procedures, students' performance as a cohort, and the quality of learning and teaching methods which may be indicated by student performance. External examiners are also encouraged to draw attention to any good practice or areas requiring attention.

59 External examiners are briefed on their role by the head of school or nominee, and are provided with programme specifications, marking conventions, degree classification conventions, information on the course structure, syllabus, module details and a copy of the previous external examiner's final report. The Courses Office monitors the timely receipt of external examiners' reports, and the head of school is responsible for providing the Courses Office with a written report of any actions taken by the school in response, and for feeding this information back to the external examiner. The Courses Office compiles a summary from the reports identifying matters for action and examples of good practice for consideration by each academic board programme committee. From May 2005, a paper summarising cross-University issues and good practice will also be presented annually to the University's Taught Courses Committee.

60 In the SED, the University claimed that this hierarchical review process provided an effective mechanism to learn from external examiners' advice and adapt provision accordingly; the audit team saw evidence to support this claim. An example of action in response to a concern raised by an external examiner was the provision to the external examiner of assessment material for students on the University's Malaysia campus who were being

considered alongside UK campus-based students. At the time of the audit, the University had recently completed a thematic UQA on external examining. The team saw the unconfirmed report of the UQA and would endorse its recommendations, particularly the proposal to gain an additional perspective by inviting external examiners to comment on all aspects of the external examining process.

61 The audit team reviewed the information in the University's Code of Practice for External Examiners, and concluded that, notwithstanding the advice given in the 2000 continuation audit, examiners' duties were still defined exclusively in terms of examination-related issues, whereas the revised external examiner's report form asked more expansive questions about the aims, content and development of the curriculum, and the quality of teaching and learning methods. It was evident from examination of a selection of external examiners' reports, both within and outside the DATs, that examiners were unclear as to how to respond to these broader questions. Based on the inconsistency observed between the Quality Manual guidance and the information requested in the external examiner's report form, the team concluded that it might be helpful to schools and external examiners if this part of the Quality Manual were to be reviewed with the aim of reconciling its guidance to align with the reporting requested of external examiners.

62 The audit team noted that concerns raised by external examiners about lack of clarity in approaches to the classification of joint honours degrees had been considered by the Assessment and Progression Committee of Taught Courses Committee. In meetings, the team was informed that schools had been advised of the need to revise their programme specifications for all joint honours programmes to specify: which degree classification algorithm applied to the conversion of marks to classes; where the marks boundary for identifying a candidate as borderline fell, and how the degree classification of such borderline candidates would be decided. Schools would also be reminded of the need to ensure that their examination board processes allowed for proper consideration of all joint honours candidates.

63 Overall, the audit team found that the University's external examiner system was robust and provided an effective means of monitoring standards and identifying both problems and good practice. In view of the range of possible and actual problems identified in determining the degree outcomes for joint honours students the team considers it advisable for the University to establish

and maintain effective monitoring of assessment schemes for joint honours programmes, with particular reference to consistency in the regulations for borderline classifications and the coordination of the scheduling of examination boards where the results of joint honours students are considered.

External reference points

64 The University claims that its Quality Manual is, as far as possible, consonant with the precepts of the *Code of practice*, arguing that schools can therefore rely on the Quality Manual to assure themselves that they are implementing those precepts in the way the University requires. As new and revised sections of the *Code* are published, the University reviews its processes and makes adjustments as necessary. By focusing on compliance with the Quality Manual, the UQA process is designed to provide the University with assurances about schools' adherence to University policy and therefore the *Code*.

65 The audit team noted that the University had given due consideration to the section of the *Code of practice* on collaborative provision. At the time of the audit, the University was giving consideration to the implications of *Code* for the regulatory frameworks governing the operation of its overseas campuses.

66 The audit team saw evidence that the CCC, in accordance with the guidance in the section of the *Code of practice* on collaborative provision, had determined that collaborative partners should be prevented from making use of 'serial' arrangements for the onward franchising of programmes leading to awards of the University and that safeguards should be incorporated into memoranda of agreement to prevent this. Memoranda seen by the team did not include such safeguards. The CCC, again in accordance with the section of the *Code* on collaborative provision, has stipulated that the University have control over publicity and advertising materials produced by collaborative institutions in respect of provision offered in the name of the University. The CCC therefore required that memoranda of agreement include a mechanism establishing procedures for the approval of publicity material to be used by collaborative institutions in respect of provision offered in the name of the University. The Memorandum of Agreement for the collaboration with St John's College does not make reference to publicity and advertising materials. In the view of the team, although the current level of the University's collaborative activity may not represent major risks to the quality and standards of its awards, there is divergence between the

University's policy and practice in mitigating those risks. The team concluded therefore that it would be advisable for the University, in accordance with its stated policies and procedures, to ensure that its formal agreements for the operation of collaborative arrangements preclude 'serial' arrangements for provision leading to awards of the University, and also include a means for the University to approve all information produced by collaborating partners for publicity purposes.

67 The University has recently begun to engage with the FHEQ by formulating its own Qualifications Framework incorporating the guidance of the FHEQ, including that about generic qualification descriptors. The University's Qualifications Framework is essentially a credit framework in which modules and the credits associated with them are assigned to a specific 'level of study' identified with the qualification descriptors provided in the FHEQ. The intention is that when new courses are proposed, and when programme specifications are resubmitted in course reviews in the period 2005-10, schools will be able to provide assurances that the academic standards of courses are compatible with the guidance in the University's Qualifications Framework. The audit team noted that it would be several years before this process would be complete and the University could demonstrate that all its courses conformed to the University's framework. Given that one of the purposes of the University's Qualifications Framework is to help applicants, students, employers, and other stakeholders to understand the University's awards and to place them in context with each other and with the awards of other institutions, the team formed the view that the University might wish to consider whether there might be merit in accelerating this process.

68 Subject benchmark statements are used in the formulation of programme specifications; in particular, they are used to identify appropriate learning outcomes for courses. Programme specifications are approved by programme committees and the UQA provides institutional-level assurance that the benchmark statements are used appropriately. The audit team noted that, according to the schedule in the Quality Manual for publishing and implementing programme specifications, changes arising from drafting programme specifications for approval in November 2004 would not be implemented until September 2005. The team also noted that programme specifications were not provided routinely for ordinary degrees or for sub-degree qualifications but was informed that these existed in draft form where such provision existed.

The University might wish to consider whether there would be some advantage in publishing programme specifications for these qualifications so that students, employers and others were informed about the competencies that they signified.

Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies

69 As noted (paragraph 24), since the 2000 continuation audit, the University has participated in eight reviews by QAA at the subject level. The SED described the arrangements for considering the outcomes of such reviews. 'A grid summarising issues for concern/ praise is provided to the Head of School by SEDU [Staff and Educational Development]... This grid is also shared formally with University central support services through the University's Teaching Committee'. The SED continued 'Heads of Schools/Departments are required to specifically address issues raised in the reports with a coherent plan of action which bears in mind continuation of aspects positively commented on, as well as issues for improvement'. Institutional overview is maintained through reporting to Teaching Committee, and at school level through action planning and liaison with SEDU.

70 The SED stated that 'a central register of all courses with PSRB [professional, statutory and regulatory body] accreditation, visit dates etc, [was] maintained by the Quality and Standards Team. This enable[d] the University to assure itself that Schools [were] preparing adequately for accreditation exercises and that the appropriate documentation was submitted to Academic Boards in a timely manner'. The audit team noted that the register did not summarise the outcome of the accreditation exercises nor the recommendations and commendations contained therein. The SED highlighted the belief that 'reports arising from reviews conducted by PSRBs [were] valuable sources of information on the quality and standards of courses'. In response to the report of the 2000 continuation audit, the University introduced a policy to ensure that PSRB reports were considered formally by schools in internal review processes. Reports of external reviews at the subject level are received by the academic boards.

71 The audit team saw documentary evidence that the procedures for the consideration of reports from external agencies, including PSRBs, were operating as intended at school level. It was less clear how enhancement and dissemination of good practice was being achieved through action planning and liaison with SEDU. The team concluded that the

process for the consideration of PSRB reports was comprehensive and appropriate, and made a positive contribution to assurance of quality and standards at school level. The University may wish to consider the merits of extending this approach to reports at the subject level from QAA in support of effective dissemination at institutional level of matters arising from the reports.

Student representation at operational and institutional level

72 The SED pointed to 'active student representation at operational and institutional level' as 'an essential part of the evaluation and development of high quality provision'. Students are represented on major University committees, including Senate, Teaching Committee, Student Services Committee and their subcommittees and there is student representation on UQAs. There is also a system of Staff Student Consultative Committees (SSCC), for 'all years of all courses in all schools'. In the SED, the University expressed the view, based on feedback from training sessions for representatives, that the course representative system was 'working well'. The SED also noted that the Students' Union had 'an active engagement with discussions on teaching quality and management' through membership of central University committees.

73 Representation is facilitated by a detailed Student Representatives Handbook, and by the provision of training by SEDU 'in partnership with the Students' Union'. Evaluation of the training indicated that participants perceived that the training had led to a substantial increase in their 'level of knowledge/skill/ability'.

74 The SWS acknowledged the strength of student representation and stated that 'the Students Union [had] a positive and productive relationship with the University'. Students whom the audit team met indicated that 'partnership' was an appropriate term for that relationship. They spoke positively of senior staff of the University, with particular mention of the Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for students.

75 In documentation and in meetings, the audit team found evidence of infrequent meetings of SSCCs in some Schools and some variability in chairing arrangements and approaches to the election of representatives. Notwithstanding this variability, there was evidence that SSCCs were valued by students as an effective means of presenting their views to the University. The UQA of the provision in Malaysia noted that the scheduling of SSCCs sometimes inhibited prompt responses to matters

raised; the response to the report indicated that a revised approach to the scheduling and frequency of SSCCs would be implemented for the 2005-06 academic session to ensure that the SSCCs had 'an effective and timely input into teaching and learning'.

76 The audit team saw evidence that the University was taking action in response to matters raised in the SWS, including the variability in the operation of SSCCs. The Teaching Committee has recently endorsed a proposal from the Students' Union for promoting and enhancing the course representative system, and noted that 'discussions would take place between SEDU and the Students' Union regarding the delivery of training'.

77 From documentary evidence and meetings with staff and students, the audit team concluded that the SED provided an accurate account of the arrangements for student representation. The team considers the University's responsive approach to student representation which promotes active student involvement in University processes at all levels in the institution to be good practice in securing effective student contributions to the assurance of quality and standards.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

78 The SED indicated that the University had a variety of mechanisms for obtaining feedback from students, including Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET), Student Evaluation of Modules (SEM), the annual Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS), and participation in UQA both as team members and in meetings with UQA teams. The results of the SSS are made available on the web, with paper copies sent to heads of schools and services. SEM is optional but SET is a requirement for all staff with responsibilities for teaching. The results of SEM and SET feed into the annual monitoring process.

79 The SED identified the Centre for Career Development (CCD) as the main vehicle for securing feedback from employers but indicated that Schools also had their own means of gaining feedback from employers. One such mechanism, where there is a 'clear career path for the graduates from a School', is for representative employers to serve on an advisory board. The CCD undertakes a series of visits to employers to discuss their recruitment needs and provides feedback from the employers to individual schools to 'influence the nature of academic provision'. Although the audit team heard that obtaining feedback from employers could be problematic it found evidence of good practice in this

area: by way of example a 'decision to convert the MSc Advanced Food Manufacture to a certificate level award [was] the direct result of employer feedback'.

80 The SED did not provide any information on approaches to securing feedback from graduates, although it is a requirement in course review that schools secure such feedback. The SED stated that the University 'place[d] great value in the feedback it received from various stakeholders and [took] action accordingly'. The SED also highlighted SET as a 'powerful way to assure the quality of teaching' and evaluated the scheme as 'effective without becoming burdensome'. The University has identified a need to collect SET information from distance and e-learning students. The SED noted that 'the numbers of recorded complaints from students about teaching and learning-related issues [were] low, which suggest[ed] that most students are satisfied with their experience'. The SED acknowledged that the variety of feedback mechanisms could lead to 'consultation fatigue', and indicated that the range of mechanisms was being reviewed, in the context of the implementation of the National Student Survey, to ensure that 'feedback [was] sought in an efficient manner and that the feedback itself was used effectively'.

81 The SWS considered that SET and SEM were used to good effect. Documentation and meetings confirmed that SET, SEM and the SSS were the main mechanisms for obtaining feedback from students. The DATs confirmed the use of SEM and SET in annual monitoring, with some variation in practice, for example, the combination of SET and SEM as a single procedure. In meetings and documentation, the audit team found evidence of variability in the feedback provided on action in response to matters raised in SEM and SET. The team also found that the cohorts nominated for inclusion in the sample of students in the SSS varied from year to year inhibiting meaningful comparison between consecutive years.

82 From documentary evidence and meetings with staff and students, the audit team concluded that the SED provided an accurate account of the University's approach to securing feedback from students, graduates and employers. It concluded that student feedback in particular was providing a positive contribution to the assurance of quality and standards.

Progression and completion statistics

83 Schools are provided with annual QDS each September by the University Policy and Planning Unit. QDS provide statistical data on student admissions, intake standards and progression and completion for

consideration alongside other annual monitoring data, and enable comparisons between schools and also between years. Schools reflect annually on both quantitative and qualitative information as part of their annual monitoring process (see paragraph 46), and are required to provide a written assessment of the value of this information and resulting actions for use within the school.

84 The QDS methodology is reviewed annually taking account of feedback from schools and relevant committees. In the SED, the University identified accuracy, consistency and efficiency of data collection as benefits of central compilation of data, in addition to reduction in the data collation burden on schools. The University intends to review how Teaching Quality Information (TQI) data on the Higher Education Research Opportunities in the UK (HERO) website can be incorporated into the annual monitoring process in order to benchmark performance against subjects at other institutions as well as internally.

85 In the DATs and committee papers, the audit team saw evidence of how the use of QDS was developing in the University. For example, in one DAT area, as well as using QDS to provide student intake, progression and achievement data at school level, the school examined the extent of student migration between joint honours and single honours degree schemes within the school, and had recently reviewed the proportion of the school's students awarded First and Upper Second class degrees to determine whether school outcomes were in line with other schools of the University and guidance from external examiners.

86 At University level, the audit team found that detailed statistical analysis had been applied to University-level data on continuation rates, to identify, for example, whether any of the data held about students such as domicile, age, gender, ethnicity or entry qualifications correlated with potential non-completion to feed into improved, targeted student support. Similarly, at academic board level, QDS data are reviewed by programme committees to track university recruitment against national trends, with a view to responding by developing new courses and/or improving marketing. On the basis of documentary evidence and meetings at institutional level and in the DATs, the audit team concluded that the University was making appropriate and effective use of statistical data in the management of quality and standards, and was progressively integrating its statistical analysis with external data such as that provided for TQI and HEFCE performance indicator data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

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

87 The SED stated that 'the University's objective [was] to recruit, retain and motivate high quality academic staff who engage[d] in high quality research, scholarship and teaching at national and international level.' Staff recruitment and selection procedures are the responsibility of the Human Resources Department.

88 The University implements formalised recruitment processes for all categories of staff with all 'academic and management /professional level appointments being made by selection committees'. The SED pointed to an increasing emphasis on evaluation of candidates' teaching abilities for lecturer, senior lecturer and reader appointments.

89 There is normally a three-year probationary period which is written into staff contracts. Teaching skills of new academic staff are developed through the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE). The probationary process involves informal discussion with the head of school at the end of year one and a formal report from the head of school to the Director of Human Resources at the end of year two. The Probationary Committee considers the report which includes one of three graded outcomes. Formal written feedback is sent to the probationer by the Director of Human Resources and may include a formal one-year warning in the case of probationers not achieving required standard. At the end of the third year the head of school makes a final report and recommendation to the Probationary Committee. There is provision for extension of the probationary period and for completion of probation not to be confirmed. The report of the continuation audit commended the University 'for its general management of probation and the appropriateness of the University's PGCAP'.

90 The SED described the appraisal system which was developed by the Career Development and Staff Appraisal Sub Committee (CDSAC), a subcommittee of the Staff Policy Committee. SEDU offers regular training sessions to appraisers and staff being appraised. Appraisal is undertaken by line managers and is intended to support competence and career development. There is structured discussion against previously agreed goals and determination of goals for the forthcoming period. The scheme specifies a minimum of two-year cycle but, in practice, most schools operate on an annual cycle. The outcomes of appraisal are confidential to the appraiser, the appraised member of staff, the head of school and the Vice-Chancellor. The University plans to

implement a Performance Review Scheme for Academic Staff by the academic year 2005-06

91 The SED stated that development of the Human Resources Strategy would allow the University to reward excellence in research, teaching, and learning. It is planned to develop and implement a 'Research and Teaching Family' to identify and recognise 'the key work activities, as well as the knowledge, skills and experience required at all levels for academic staff, including those whose roles are teaching and learning focused rather than research led'. The University anticipates that this will provide for clear career pathways where 'excellence and professionalism' can be recognised and rewarded.

92 The SED was clear that the University operated a policy of promoting staff on merit with no predetermined annual limit on numbers. The Promotions Committee, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, considers applications for promotion against criteria in the areas of research, teaching, and administration and other services. The promotion process for readerships and Chairs considers teaching contribution but the primary criterion is research. The SED noted that the University was planning to review the Academic Promotions process 'in recognition of the importance of acknowledging teaching and learning practitioners through the promotion procedure'.

93 The report of the continuation audit commended the University's Lord Dearing Awards, designed to encourage staff to enhance the student learning environment through the development of both traditional and innovative approaches to teaching. The SED indicated that the awards were considered 'a mark of distinction at the University' and contributed to discussions of promotions.

94 From documentation and meetings with staff, the audit team confirmed that the SED provided an accurate depiction of the University's procedures for the assurance of the quality of teaching staff through appointment, appraisal and reward. The team concluded that the processes were fit for purpose and operating as intended.

Assurance of the quality of teaching through staff support and development

95 The University's staff support and development activity is coordinated by SEDU, established in 2003 following internal restructuring. The aim of SEDU is 'to provide a range of staff and educational development services to assist staff in developing the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver the University's aims'. SEDU, 'with the direction of the

Educational Development Advisory Group' (EDAG), is responsible for delivering aspects of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Staff development needs are identified through organisational plans and feedback from the University's appraisal system.

96 One of the fundamental ways in which the University, through SEDU, ensures the quality of teaching, is the provision of the PGCHE which is externally accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The PGCHE is mandatory for all probationary lecturers. Participants are supported by 'collegial groups with input from experienced academics'. Although the SED acknowledged that the PGCHE was 'not universally liked', noting the intent for 'further efforts' to continue the improvement in its evaluation ratings, staff whom the audit team met reported enthusiastically on the benefits and opportunities offered by the course. The SED expressed the University's 'wish to encourage staff' to join the HEA and noted that the University paid the application costs for staff on the fast-track route to membership.

97 An Associate Teachers Programme is provided by SEDU for staff who support teaching or who have a part-time contract, and is designed to enhance and develop skills in teaching and learning. The audit team noted this initiative for its contribution to the inclusion of all staff in the University's agenda for the enhancement and support of teaching. SEDU also offers short courses in learning and teaching for teaching staff and support staff.

98 SEDU works with the Graduate School to provide training for postgraduate students and Contract Research Staff who teach. Students whom the audit team met were appreciative of this training which demonstrates the responsiveness of the University to the report of the continuation audit which suggested that the University 'consider the desirability of' requiring all teaching postgraduates to be given training in the support of learning.

99 The SED claimed that the 'enhancement processes co-ordinated by SEDU form[ed] a coherent strategy to support and improve learning and teaching and the learning environment at the University' and continued 'the University strategy to bring together staff and educational development, though still in an early stage appear[ed] to be working'. The University was commended in the continuation audit report for 'its provision for the development of its staff and the effective means it uses for providing this'. The present audit team found that the University continued to provide effective means for the support of staff to a high

standard. The team considered the work of SEDU and its contribution to the sustenance and continuous improvement of educational provision across the University's campuses to represent good practice in providing innovative and effective methods to ensure staff were engaged in preparation for and enhancement of quality teaching and learning practice.

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

100 The University's main mechanism for distance learning is the development of e-learning. The SED indicated that SEDU played a prominent and valuable role in supporting staff in the development of e-learning, and it was clear, both from DAT meetings and documentation that this provision typically took the form of 'blended learning', in which e-learning was supplementary to more traditional teaching. The SED did not offer a view on the effectiveness of the University's approach to distributed and distance learning. E-learning is subject to the University's standard quality assurance procedures.

101 The University aims to be 'at the forefront of e-learning developments' and the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy identifies the 'continued development of e-learning' as a 'key theme', referring to:

- significant investment in the 'infrastructure for technological developments and innovative e-learning initiatives across faculties'
- the development, in discussion with students, of a web portal, to create a 'flexible, personalised learning environment'
- the extension, by the Centre for Teaching Enhancement, of provision for 'web -base teaching and learning resources'.

102 In line with the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the Student Portal is now the major means of access to the various electronic resources, and was made available to the audit team. The team considered the Student Portal to be a noteworthy resource, and was able to confirm that it provided a flexible, personalised learning environment, incorporating a wide variety of learning resources and information, including personal details, information about modules and courses, email, electronic information sources and virtual learning environments (VLEs). The team also saw details of the 'Connected Campus' project, which will further enhance the provision of electronic resources

Learning support resources

103 The University's Information Services (IS) section provides an integrated library and information technology (IT) service and, according to the SED, aims to provide 'high-quality services relevant to the needs of the University community'. Library services are provided through 12 libraries located near relevant school buildings. The range of loan services includes short loan and inter-library loan as well as on-line reading lists. Subject Librarians provide specialist support and are responsible for the purchase of library stock in consultation with schools.

104 IT Services include provision of the University's voice and data network, central hardware and central IT services, including management of the University's business systems. Student access to PC applications is through a network of 58 Information Services Computer Resource Areas (ISCRAS) and Teaching ISCRAS (TISCRAS). Many ISCRAS are open for 24 hours every day. University halls of residence are linked to the University network through the Student Network Service. The SED made reference to 'e Nottingham' and the significant investment the institution has made to enhance web services including the development of a number of portals. IS provides and manages audiovisual facilities and IT equipment within the University's centrally timetabled teaching spaces. IT Support Teams liaise with schools and departments to provide support and advice and an IT Help-line service for staff and students.

105 The provision of IS services is subject to the Information Services Strategy, revised on a three-year cycle, the development and implementation of which is the responsibility of the Strategy Group for Information Services. The services provided are defined in the IS Service statement and monitored through a set of Key Performance Indicators. An Annual Service Enhancement Plan documents the list of small-scale projects to be undertaken over a year and provides the means for monitoring successful completion. In the SED, the University identified the development of the IS Service Statement and the associated planning arrangements as a positively evaluated 'major initiative'.

106 The SED pointed to consultation and feedback as important means of securing a service that is relevant to the needs of users. Information from users is gathered through the University Student Satisfaction Survey; IS User surveys; annual school planning; library 'comment boxes', and on-line forms from the IS website. In addition, the provision of services is discussed in the Library Advisory Board, which includes student representatives, and in user consultative groups

that include Faculty Library User Groups. There are also library liaison officers within each school. Surveys take place with respect to all significant aspects of provision including teaching rooms standards and the operation of the central timetable.

107 IS has been involved in designing ISCRA's for the provision in Malaysia and the planned provision in China. IT systems at the overseas campuses are linked to the University's UK provision. The SWS confirmed that IS 'display[ed] a keenness to innovate, and to be customer (i.e. student) focused'. The SWS reported that members of the Students' Union Executive had regular meetings with IS, in addition to student representation within the feeder committees to the Library Advisory Board. The SWS noted that IS provision was progressively adjusting to new demands increased number of ISCRA's and updated machines. In the DATs and documentation, the audit team found indications of variability of provision at school level for postgraduate students.

108 The audit team formed the view that the IS strategy was progressive, imaginative, developmental and responsive. The team considered that the Quick User computer facility in one library where students can stand at a console and use it for not more than 15 minutes illustrated innovation by IS. Documentary evidence and discussion showed that ePortal initiatives had been properly monitored and adapted to user needs. The University may wish to review the provision of learning resource support to postgraduates to establish parity across schools. From documentary evidence and meetings, the team concluded that the SED provided an accurate account of the University's policy and procedures for the assurance of the quality of its learning resources.

Academic and personal guidance, support and supervision

109 The University introduced a Policy Statement on Personal and Academic Student Support in 2002. In the SED, the University stated that 'well structured and accessible support...[was] an essential component in the successful academic careers of its students'. This support is delivered primarily through the University's tutorial system which operates across the schools and is backed up by a 'network of specialist services' available to students at all campuses and administered by Student Services, a section of the Registrar's Department, which reports to the Student Services Committee. It is important to the University that all these services are available through a single access point, and that they are 'well publicised and accessible to students'. The University is working towards this goal through the bringing

together of previously dispersed access points.

110 Among the relevant documentation is a section of the Quality Manual, 'Policy on Personal and Academic Student Support: Operating Statement and Commentary', last amended in February 2003. This guarantees the tutoring system, and says that all tutors should be members of academic or academic-related staff, other than in exceptional circumstances. It establishes guidance for tutors, and stipulates that training for tutors should be available. Each School has a senior tutor, and these are linked by a Senior Tutors' Network, organised by the University Senior Tutor who is a member of both Teaching Committee and Student Services Committee. Hall tutors, who are part of the institutional guidance regime, receive induction from SEDU on key issues such as first aid, disability and approaches to counselling, backed up by a Hall Tutors Handbook. The responsibility for monitoring the quality of support for students rests with UQA. The SWS indicated that the standard of support through the tutorial system was generally high, although variable across schools.

111 Academic staff are the primary source of academic guidance for students; some have 'office hours' when they are available to students and they can also be contacted through email. Undergraduates on joint honours courses have a personal tutor in their lead discipline; in the other discipline there is a school liaison officer whom they can consult. There is a well-documented Complaints Procedure in place. The University Counselling Service provides a free, confidential service for all students and staff, along with a wide range of workshops, again available to all students and staff.

112 The University has a Disability Policy Advice Unit located within Student Services, which operates in accordance with the University Disability Action Plan. The audit team noted the effective way in which the Plan had been developed, and in particular the involvement of students and the care that the University had taken to ensure that the Plan was fully compliant with external standards and requirements. There is a network of school Disability Liaison Officers, which is well supported and functioning effectively. In meetings, the team heard some concern about limited accessibility to the new location of Student Services.

113 There is a HEFCE-funded Disability Project which works directly with schools to advise on adjustments to teaching practice in specific subject-based contexts in the context of the Special Education Needs and Disability Act. Work on disability, dyslexia, mental health and other issues is ongoing under the umbrella of the University's Diversity Taskforce which draws its

membership from across the University's community. There is funding available as a consequence of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, which is being used by SEDU to cascade skills and knowledge to staff across the University.

114 The University has pioneered an electronic personal records system, ePARS. The SED indicated that take up of ePARs was over 50 per cent but acknowledged variability between schools in the extent of engagement with the project. This accords with the impression gained by the audit team from meetings that 'buy-in' among students and staff was not complete and that individual schools were not using the system to full advantage, instead, in some cases, confining it to a method of making appointments with tutors. The team also heard that e-PARS was in the process of being replaced by a comprehensive system, e-PORTFOLIO, to provide an enhanced throughput of information from 'new entry profile' through to employability.

115 The audit team learned that a primary source of help for postgraduate research students was the University's Graduate School which has a strategy for becoming a 'gateway' for academic support. At the time of the audit, relocation of the Graduate School was being considered to bring it closer to its users. There is a Graduate Student Research Training Programme which is well attended and well regarded by the clientele, although there was some evidence of uneven take-up of its provision.

116 The audit team had initial concerns about the availability of all academic support across all campuses, but was informed that the aim was to ensure not an identical system running across all campuses but rather to assure 'equity of experience', bearing in mind a variety of cultural contexts. The team heard differing responses to the issue of disability provision on the Malaysia campus, although it was explained that both in Malaysia and for the planned campus in China there was input at the new-build stage which should allow for the provision of services of a high order.

117 There was evidence that the majority of students were confident about the amount and quality of academic and personal guidance and support they were receiving. The SWS reported generally high levels of satisfaction with systems for personal support and guidance, with the following comment identified as typical: '...the people who run the service are excellent; we just need more of them'. The audit team found good practice in pastoral care, but there was also evidence that this was somewhat variable between schools, and although training in

personal tutoring is available it is not compulsory, a fact on which students commented.

118 The SED claimed that the University recognised the 'independent status of each student' and the audit team found evidence in meetings that students did feel themselves to be regarded as 'independent learners' and valued this perception of their position. The University's policies and procedures in this area are in alignment with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*. On the basis of documentary evidence and meetings with staff and students, the audit team concluded that the SED provided an accurate account of the University's approach to academic and personal guidance, support and supervision.

Collaborative provision

119 The University has determined that 'collaboration as expressed through validation and other similar activity [is] no longer appropriate as a strategic goal'. The University's only collaborative validated arrangement is with St John's College. The SED referred to a 'small number of joint programme and joint award agreements'. The University's Register of Collaborative Courses lists one joint programme, two joint awards and three articulation agreements.

120 The University has a growing amount of overseas provision. At the time of the audit, the major provision overseas was the University's campus in Malaysia but the University was also developing a campus in China.

121 The Quality Manual includes a guide for producing memoranda of agreement between the University and collaborating institutions, and a 'Step-by-step guide to developing a collaborative course'. The Manual specifies that proposals to establish collaborative courses are considered by the CCC and that 'once established the course will be subject to the normal quality assurance procedures as laid out in the Quality Manual...CCC is charged with monitoring and reviewing collaborative courses and advising on the renewal of agreements covering the course(s)'. The SED pointed to the work of the CCC in advising on policy for the operation of collaborative arrangements and advising the academic boards on the initial approval and ongoing monitoring and review of partnerships as ensuring that 'the standards and quality of such courses and awards [were] the same as equivalent courses delivered solely by the University'.

122 In 2002, QAA audited the collaborative arrangement between the University and the National University of Singapore for delivery of a joint LLM in

International Commercial Law. This collaboration has now ceased in the face of reduced demand for the programme. The SED indicated that the findings of that audit 'fed into the University's review of its mechanisms for dealing with collaboration and [were] reflected in' the current arrangements. The report of the audit identified control of publicity materials as an area for further consideration by the University; the present audit team considers that there is still further work to be undertaken in this area as the Memoranda of Agreement with St John's College did not include a requirement for the University to approve all information produced for publicity purposes (see paragraph 66). The report also noted deficiencies in the contractual arrangements for the operation of the collaboration. The SED confirmed that 'the Quality Manual now require[d] school proposals for new collaborations to include both a memorandum of understanding and a programme-level memorandum of agreement'.

123 In March 2004, St John's College was the subject of a UQA that the University described as 'successful'. The CCC noted in October 2004 that St John's College had submitted a detailed written response to the UQA, indicating action taken, or to be taken, for five essential and 20 desirable recommendations. The minutes indicated that the response from the College would be discussed 'later in the session'. At the time of the audit, the response had not been considered by the CCC but had been discussed by the Humanities Academic Board in October 2004.

124 The SED indicated that the arrangements for collaborative courses would be reviewed by the CCC in light of the revised section of the *Code of practice* on collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning, (including e-learning). Minutes of the CCC indicated that a new Memorandum of Agreement template would be devised to take into account the revised section of the *Code*. The audit team would encourage the University to expedite this review of its approach to collaborative courses.

Section 3: The audit investigations: discipline audit trails and thematic enquiries

Discipline audit trails

125 In each of the selected DATs, appropriate members of the audit team met staff and students to discuss the programmes, studied a sample of assessed student work, saw examples of learning resource materials, and studied annual module and programme reports and periodic school reviews

relating to the programmes. Their findings in respect of the academic standards of awards are as follows.

Biology

126 The scope of the DAT was the School of Biology and covered the following programmes:

- Biology (BSc Honours and BSc Ordinary)
- Zoology (BSc Honours and BSc Ordinary)
- Genetics (BSc Honours and BSc Ordinary)
- Human Genetics (BSc Honours and BSc Ordinary)
- Biological Photography and Imaging (MSc)
- Biological Imaging and Photography (PGDip)

127 The DSED was written for the purposes of the audit. Programme specifications were appended for the undergraduate honours programmes and for the MSc in Biological Photography and Imaging. The programme specifications for the undergraduate honours programmes were referenced to the *Subject benchmark statement* for biosciences. There were no programme specifications for the ordinary degrees or the PgDip in Biological Imaging and Photography.

128 The School of Biology was formed in August 2003 on the merger of the Division of Genetics with the School of Life and Environmental Sciences. For the purposes of administration, the School is responsible to the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences but it has full committee representation in the Faculty of Science which is responsible for ensuring the quality of the taught courses. A committee structure for the new School integrating elements from the predecessor groupings was established in the academic year 2003-04.

129 The DSED stated that courses were reviewed annually by course directors in the context of the QDS information. The annual review reports for undergraduate programmes for the academic year 2003-04 contained analyses of progression and completion data, but the centrally produced QDS was not used. Staff whom the audit team met indicated that the forthcoming course review of the genetics and human genetics programmes would draw on programmes specific QDS.

130 The undergraduate provision in biology and zoology was subject to course review in 2002, when the programmes were housed in the School of Life and Environmental Sciences. The conduct of the review followed University procedures although there was no external academic member on the review panel. Following the creation of the new School, a major curriculum review of biology and zoology was established, 'to make the most effective use of the

combined strengths of the new School'; the proposed revisions are intended to 'reinforce the achievement of programme learning outcomes', by ensuring that they are supported at module level. The procedures for approving the revised curricula followed guidelines in the University's Quality Manual, including consultation with external examiners.

131 The DSED indicated that the genetics and human genetics programmes were 'currently subject to an internal five year review'. In the course of the audit, the audit team was informed that the date of the review had been postponed and that the School intended to complete the collation of related documentary evidence in April or May 2005. The procedure will include members external to the University on the review group, although these members will not be wholly independent as they also serve as external examiners for the programmes.

132 Course directors provide annual monitoring reports to the School Learning and Teaching Committee in accordance with standard University requirements. Minutes of the Learning and Teaching Committee, identifying action points are circulated to staff through the School intranet and recommendations are considered in staff meetings. Annual monitoring and review will be strengthened in future by the establishment of a School 'quality assurance group' that will consider all monitoring and review reports for the School's provision.

133 The most recent course approval in the School was the MSc in Biological Photography and Imaging in 2001. 'External advisers' were involved in the process. The audit team saw the report of a reflective annual review for the academic year 2002-03.

134 External examiners' reports are considered initially by the Course Director who drafts a response after consultation with the examinations officer. All reports are seen by the School Head of Teaching and circulated to the Learning and Teaching Committee; a full staff meeting considers the Committee's proposals for action in response to the reports. The Programmes Sub-Committee of the Academic Board confirms that all points have been addressed and identifies points of good practice. External examiners receive a written response to their reports. Consideration of external examiners' reports has led to several changes to practice, including the reintroduction of student interviews with external examiners. Reports seen by the audit team demonstrated that external examiners viewed coursework as well as examination scripts, as recommended in the continuation audit report. Overall, the reports seen by the team confirmed that

the required standards were met, and contained many positive comments, including the description of the Genetics programme as 'an excellent programme that Nottingham can be proud of'.

135 At the time of the audit visit, no report had been received for the MSc in Biological Photography and Imaging, the Board of Examiners having been held in September 2004. Minutes of the Board, including a brief account of the external examiner's oral comments and of action to be taken in response were made available to the audit team. Staff from the School and from the central Courses Office informed the team that the absence of the report was being explored following the procedures in the University's Quality Manual which specifies that failure to submit a report constitutes grounds for not re-appointing an external examiner for subsequent years. The team formed the view that processes within the School for the consideration of external examiners' reports were rigorous but that there were some delays in responding to external examiners' reports which the School will wish to eliminate in future.

136 Assessment policies and procedures are in broad alignment with the section of the *Code of practice* on the assessment of students. The audit team saw evidence of clear assessment guidelines, marking schemes and examination procedures. Students receive written feedback on coursework and examinations via well-designed forms and students whom the team met confirmed that feedback on coursework was timely and helpful to them in their approach to subsequent assignments.

137 The DSED stated that the new School had 'gradually harmonised ... differences in structures and practices' between the predecessor constituent bodies. This claim was supported by the minutes of the Learning and Teaching Committee, which demonstrated the development of unified procedures for second marking; giving feedback on examinations, and consideration of mitigating circumstances.

138 The audit team considered samples of assessed work and was able to confirm that the work matched the expectations of the programme specifications, and that the standard of student achievement was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

139 Student handbooks seen by the audit team contained detailed and comprehensible information and provided students with a clear indication of the School's expectations of them for learning and assessment. Students whom the team met confirmed that the information that they received was clear and accurate.

140 The School Plan for the new School, produced in the academic year 2003-04, involved significant accommodation moves, and the DSED indicated that 'it [might] be some time before this plan [was] fully implemented'. Students whom the audit team met noted that there had been some disruption during building work, but were unanimous in their view that library, laboratory and electronic resources were appropriate and sufficient to the needs of their programmes.

141 The School established the aim for the academic year 2004-05 that all teaching staff provide web-based material to support their teaching through use of a VLE. VLE usage is monitored by the Learning and Teaching Committee which found that not all staff were using the VLE. Accordingly, the School issued a document, School Approach to the use of VLE', with a revised target for all modules to use a VLE by the end of the academic year 2004-05. Students whom the audit team met were very complimentary about the Student Portal, including the access it gave to e-journals and VLEs.

142 The DSED pointed to the Biology Taught Courses Office as 'a pivotal component in the management of quality and standards'. In meetings, both staff and students confirmed the value of the office, speaking of well-informed personnel. Students whom the audit team met confirmed the claim in the DSED that the School had a 'good record' of pastoral support and praised the supportiveness of staff. All students in the School have the opportunity to participate in PARS and e-PARS, as confirmed in meetings with the audit team by students who both used and liked e-PARS.

143 The School participates in both SEM and SET in accordance with standard University requirements. Students whom the audit team were positive about both SET and SEM; they confirmed that the points they raised were acted on. Students enrolled on the Biology and Zoology courses confirmed that they were being consulted about the proposed changes to these programmes.

144 Following the merger there is now a single, School-wide SSCC which is required to meet at least once per semester. In meetings, students and staff confirmed to the audit team that SSCCs were effective forums for discussion of matters of interest to the students, with active student involvement. By way of example, an inconsistency between delivery sites in expectations for project work was raised at the first meeting of the new school-wide committee; the issue was then discussed at the Teaching Committee, when action was agreed to enable

clearer procedures to be established. There is no dedicated SSCC for postgraduate students but those whom the team met indicated that both taught master's and research students could provide informal feedback on their experience and expressed satisfaction with this arrangement.

145 The audit team found that the quality of learning opportunities in the School of Biology was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the named awards.

English Studies

146 The scope of the DAT was the School of English Studies and covered the following programmes:

- BA Honours in English Studies
- BA Honours in English Studies and Theology
- BA Honours in Viking Studies
- BA Honours in English Studies and Latin
- BA Honours in Classical Civilisation and English Studies
- MA in Applied Linguistics by Web Based Distance Learning
- MA in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching by Web Based Distance Learning
- MA in Literary Linguistics by Web Based Distance Learning
- MA in Modern English Language by Web Based Distance Learning
- MA in Applied Linguistics
- MA in Literary Linguistics
- MA in Modern English Language
- MA in Victorian Studies
- MA in Medieval English
- MA in Viking and Anglo-Saxon Studies
- MA in English Studies
- MA in D.H. Lawrence and the Modern Age
- MA in English and American Studies
- MA in Dramaturgy and Performance Analysis.

147 The DSED was written for the purposes of the audit and was accompanied by programme specifications that were referenced to the subject benchmark. The School is organised into four sections: Modern English Language, Medieval, Drama, and Modern English Literature. For administrative purposes, it has four committees, all of which report to the School Board, which consists of all academic staff, with administrative staff in attendance: Policy Committee, of which all section heads plus two

elected junior staff are members; Teaching and Learning Committee; Research Committee; and a newly formed Admissions, Communications and Marketing Committee. The latter has a wide brief, which includes the matter of employability; the audit team heard that consideration was being given to the establishment of an external advisory board, which would include alumni and employers.

148 The DSED indicated that QDS data were scrutinised by the Teaching and Learning Committee and integrated with qualitative data for external examiners and examination boards. Progression data indicated a high level of retention, with virtually no undergraduates or taught masters' students failing or withdrawing from the courses.

149 Internal monitoring and review are carried out in accordance with the University's standard procedures. There was a UQA of English Studies in 2000. The syllabus in English has been recently redesigned, and provides for a suitable variety of teaching and assessment modes. The mechanism for keeping this variety and its pedagogic appropriateness under review is the School's Teaching and Learning Committee and is embedded in the process for drawing up new programme specifications; there is further monitoring of pedagogical effectiveness in the Annual Review process.

150 The School participates in SEM and SET in accordance with University requirements. Students whom the audit team met regarded SET and SEM as useful but indicated that feedback to students on action taken in response to matters raised was variable.

151 External examiners' reports seen by the audit team were on the whole very supportive of the quality of learning and teaching in the School. The ways in which matters arising were dealt with were clear and scrupulous. The standard of students' work is high. At the time of the audit, there had been a recent revision of the marking process, which had entailed moving from overall double marking to a process of 'moderation'. There is an Examinations Officer who assures compliance with the Quality Manual. The team saw instances where essay cover-sheets had been only partially completed, but was told that this would be due to the differing demands of the sub-disciplines within the school, which permitted slight variations in practice and criteria. From scrutiny of student work, the team was able to confirm that the standard of student achievement was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

152 At the start of the academic year, new undergraduates receive a 'starter pack' including the

Undergraduate Study Guide, which they are then guided through by a morning's induction and by two meetings with personal tutors. MA and research students are introduced to their course by the Directors of Research and of the MA Programmes, and then meet their supervisors or course convenors. The audit team heard of some problems with the induction of international and joint honours students, which were under consideration in the School.

153 As well as these resources, students receive a separate handout titled 'Producing Assessed Coursework' and separate guides are available for each module. Learning outcomes, as far as handbooks and guides are concerned, were largely inexplicit, but satisfaction was expressed by students with their own sense of achievement in terms of skills as well as content. The audit team formed the opinion that the student handbooks were of a high quality but would encourage the School to consider including explicit information about intended learning outcomes in the guidance material that it provides to students.

154 The audit team explored the use of VLEs in the School. The prevailing concept in the School is of 'blended learning', which is interpreted locally to mean a mixed mode with VLEs largely used to support face-to-face pedagogy, and as 'bulletin boards' to assist students with seminar preparation. There was general agreement among staff and students whom the team met that access to e-journals was good and academically helpful. Students judged library provision to be appropriate to requirements.

155 Students' voices are heard through the SSCC; the audit team found that in the School of English Studies this was an active and successful mode of communication, while noting that outcomes generally seemed to consist of the recommendations being forwarded to another School committee for action. Student members of the SSCC receive, as a matter of University policy, training from the Students' Union.

156 In meetings, the audit team heard that students in the School of English Studies had come to the University with high expectations, and that these expectations were met; students felt themselves to be valued, and to benefit from the large number of active and respected researchers involved in teaching. They considered themselves to be given the status of 'independent learners'. Staff and students alike spoke of a strong emphasis on pastoral care. No member of staff in the school has yet been a recipient of a Lord Dearing Award, although the team heard that there was now a specific case in progress.

157 The audit team found that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for the taught

programmes of study leading to the named awards in the School of English Studies.

Mathematical Sciences

158 The scope of the DAT was the School of Mathematical Sciences and covered the following programmes:

Single honours

- three-year BSc Mathematics
- four-year MMath Mathematics
- three-year BSc Mathematics with Engineering
- four-year MMath Mathematics with Engineering

The Mathematical Sciences element of the following joint honours programmes:

- three-year JH BSc Mathematics and Computer Science
- three-year JH BSc Mathematics and Economics
- three-year JH BSc Mathematics and Management Studies
- three-year JH BSc Mathematics and Philosophy
- three-year JH BEng Electronic Engineering and Mathematics
- four-year JH MEng Electronic Engineering and Mathematics.

Taught postgraduate programmes

- one-year MSc Statistics to be introduced in October 2005
- 0.75-year PgDip Statistics.

159 The DSED was written for the audit, to a University-provided template, and was supplemented by programme specifications for each degree scheme and a curriculum map identifying the overall mathematics learning outcomes for each course module offered by the department. No programme specifications were supplied for anything other than honours degrees. All programme specifications made reference to the *Subject benchmark statement* for mathematics, statistics and operational research, and those for some of the joint honours programmes also referred to relevant subject benchmark statements from the partner school. There was no explicit reference to the FHEQ, but comparison of programme specifications and module learning outcomes with the FHEQ indicated that all programmes were appropriately aligned.

160 The programme specifications for joint honours schemes with Management Studies and Philosophy set out explicitly the assessment regime for the

Mathematics component of the degree. There was no corresponding detail for the assessment regime in the other component, leading to a lack of clarity about how overall degree outcomes would be determined. Full details of both components were included for joint honours schemes with Electronic Engineering. External examiner reports for both Mathematics and other schools have also indicated concern about examination board procedures for considering the classification of borderline joint honours students. A recent University-wide review of this issue has led to revisions to the guidance in the University Quality Manual which now specifies the need for assessment rules in all University joint honours programme specifications to be updated to include additional information on the manner in which degree classification decisions are made (see paragraph 36). The School will wish to apply the revised guidance to its joint honours provision with Management Studies and Philosophy.

161 The University's QDS for Mathematics is monitored in the first instance by the School Quality and Standards Committee (QSC), which uses it as part of its input to the School's Annual Course Monitoring report, prepared by QSC. In addition to QDS data providing a breakdown of student intake, progression and achievement at School level, the School has regularly monitored its own individual course data, which extend back for several years before QDS became available. Examples of monitoring based on QDS data include: checks on the extent of student migration between joint honours and single honours degree schemes within the School, and review of the proportion of the School's students awarded First and Upper Second class degrees since 1999, where guidance was also sought from external examiners. The policy on the latter in place at the time of the audit dates from 2000, but has been closely monitored since and was most recently reconfirmed by a School Meeting in September 2004. An example of action resulting from monitoring of the School's own course-level data was a review process applied to all level A and B honours modules in 2003-04 following the introduction of new honours degree structures in 2002-03. Difficulties with the first running of some new level B modules were detected, which resulted in adjustment to content and delivery mechanisms in the 2004-05 session.

162 Responsibility for teaching quality, quality assurance, progression and assessment matters lies with the School's QSC, which liaises closely with the Teaching and Learning Steering Committee (TLSC). Mechanisms for assuring the quality of teaching and

learning are detailed in the School's Learning and Teaching Strategy (part of the School's comprehensive staff handbook), and include module reports, module reviews, SEM and annual course review and SET. The current module and course review scheme, administered by QSC, is consistent with the University Quality Manual, and was approved by Faculty Audit in 1999. Module review is based around Module Box Files (MBFs) maintained by each module convenor, where module reviews contributed by students through online SEM, and comments from both the SSCC and the annual Student Forum are collected. Module convenors are then responsible for completing an annual Module Report Form (MRF), reporting on student performance, any comments from moderators, supporting staff and external examiners, and any consequent proposed and implemented changes to the module.

163 Each module is further subject to periodic Module Review, where module documentation is scrutinised by QSC nominees who then discuss issues concerned with module delivery or student performance with the module convenor. The resulting reports are forwarded to QSC for consideration, as well as being retained in MBFs for future reference. Any key themes are either referred on to TLSC or included as part of Annual Course Monitoring. As a result of the Major Course Review that began in 2001, and consequent year-by-year introduction of new modules since the academic year 2002-03 an intensive programme of reviews for new core modules has taken place, resulting in adjustments to the syllabus and presentation of several modules.

164 The School has separate external examiners for each of its three divisions (Pure and Applied Mathematics, and Statistics) and a dedicated external examiner for its programme of service teaching to seven other client schools. External examiners' reports are considered initially by QSC, which drafts the School's written response, in conjunction with the Director of Service Teaching in the case of reports on service teaching. Recommendations from QSC are then passed to TLSC and/or the School Meeting as appropriate for action, as well as being reported to the University, and conclusions are summarised in the Annual Course Monitoring report. Examples were identified both of cases where external examiners' recommendations had been implemented, and where they had been considered but not enacted, with the rationale for the decision being reported back to the external examiner concerned. The audit team concluded that the School's use of external examiners provided thorough and rigorous external

monitoring of its degree examination processes, with timely action and response both at School and University level to matters that they raised.

165 Formal assessment of students in the School is principally by means of timed examinations, with some courses also incorporating a specified percentage of assessed coursework. Project work also contributes to the assessment of some modules and forms the whole of others. Examination papers are designed to balance routine and more challenging material, and School procedures for setting and moderating assessed work are intended to ensure that learning outcomes for each module are covered. School marking practices reflect University policy as described in the School Staff Handbook, and were confirmed in a sample of assessed work examined by the team. A concern about some aspects of the assessment system identified in the QAA subject review of Mathematics was addressed by abandoning the previous normalisation scheme in favour of an Examination Monitoring group which now oversees module comparability. Overall, the audit team was satisfied that the nature of the assessment and standard of student achievement in the School were appropriate to the titles of the relevant awards and their location within the FHEQ.

166 The School provides separate handbooks available in print and on its website for its undergraduate and postgraduate research students, there are not yet any taught postgraduate students. It also provides an extensive set of study skills notes. Full module details, including assessment methods, are provided in the University catalogue of modules, and these are also accessible from the undergraduate pages of the School website. The Undergraduate Handbook includes, among other information, descriptions of study methods and School feedback processes, as well as advice on how students can evaluate their own progress and deal with difficulties, and the reciprocal responsibilities of staff and students. It also includes information on plagiarism and details of the School's personal tutor system. The audit team concluded that these materials provided clear and comprehensive explanations of the learning patterns expected of the School's students, and support to help them meet these expectations.

167 The School runs a combined personal and academic tutor system for first-year students with weekly academic meetings for student groups to discuss core material. Thereafter, the tutorial system provides only pastoral support, with academic support provided through problem classes associated with each module, normally delivered and marked by postgraduate teaching assistants. Some students

whom the audit team met were unhappy with the reduction from weekly tutorials in the first year to more limited pastoral support in the second year; a gradual transition would have been preferred but they accepted that this approach was consistent with the School's intention for its students to develop as independent learners and stated that staff were readily accessible and supportive. Offering second year tutorials is also considered by the School to be impractical due to the diversity of students' module choices and the differing expertise of staff; instead resources are directed towards problem classes. A computerised attendance and progress monitoring system (cwreg) provides email information to tutors and there is almost universal use within the School of ePARS as a recording mechanism for pastoral support and personal development activities.

168 The School conforms with University practice, as set out in the Quality Manual, as regards postgraduate research student supervision: this includes formal annual reviews of progress by means of a written report and viva, and maintenance of formal records of at least 10 meetings per year between the research student and supervisor(s), including student comments. The audit team examined examples of both these records and found them to be a noteworthy and thorough set of personal research progression and development information. All research students who engage in teaching support are required to undertake appropriate training from SEDU, and receive mentoring from the lecturer concerned.

169 The School's Learning Resources Strategy is the responsibility of the Resources Committee. Undergraduate students have 24-hour access to IT facilities through ISCRAs maintained by IS, and two dedicated computer rooms supporting additional mathematical software. The School is moving towards a system where all postgraduate research students have dedicated PCs. Library facilities are provided primarily through the Science Library. Students whom the audit team met were generally satisfied with all these facilities. Increasing use is being made of e-learning technology to enhance students' learning, and there is extensive and admirable ancillary support for service mathematics courses to other schools through a dedicated VLE system, which feedback has confirmed is very popular with students

170 Students contribute to module review through on-line SEM survey forms, which are reported individually to module convenors through the MBFs and summarised for QSC. Summaries of the feedback obtained by the department are fed back to students through the annual course monitoring report, which is

published on the student pages of the School website. The SSCC which normally meets once per term and comprises five staff members and 15 students with a student Chair, and the annual Student Forum, open to all the school's undergraduate students, may also comment on individual modules. SSCC Minutes are published on School notice boards and the School SSCC web page. Recent examples where action has been taken in response to requests from students include agreement by the School to a policy setting out minimum levels of provision of solutions to past examination papers and an agreement to indicate marks breakdowns within questions on examination papers. In addition to input to departmental business through the SSCC and the Student Forum, there are also undergraduate student representatives on TLSC and the School Meeting, and postgraduate research student representatives on Research Committee and Resources Committee.

171 Undergraduate students whom the audit team met were generally very satisfied with their degree schemes, and particularly praised the wide choice of modules available which reflected the considerable spread of research interests among the staff, and the approachability of staff. Research students were similarly satisfied with the excellent supervisory arrangements provided by the School, and the complementary support, including research key skills, available through the Graduate School.

172 Overall, the audit team was satisfied that the quality of the learning opportunities was suitable for the programmes of study in the School of Mathematical Sciences, leading to the named awards.

Mechanical, Materials and Manufacturing Engineering

173 The scope of the DAT was the School of Mechanical, Materials and Manufacturing Engineering and covered the following programmes:

Single honours

- BSc Hons Biomedical Materials Science
- MEng Hons Integrated Engineering
- BEng Hons Mechanical Engineering
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering (Business)
- BEng Hons Integrated Mechanical Engineering
- MEng Hons Integrated Mechanical Engineering
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering (Automotive)
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering (Aerospace)
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering, Materials and Manufacture

- BEng Hons Product Design and Manufacture
 - MEng Hons Product Design and Manufacture
- and the Engineering element of the following programmes:
- BEng Hons Manufacturing Engineering and Management
 - MEng Manufacturing Engineering and Management
 - BEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with Mathematics
 - MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with Mathematics
 - BEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with French
 - MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with French
 - BEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with German
 - MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with German
 - BEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with Spanish
 - MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with Spanish
 - MEng Hons Manufacturing Engineering and Management with French
 - BEng Hons Manufacturing Engineering and Management with Japanese
 - BEng Hons Mechanical Design, Materials and Manufacture
 - MEng Hons Mechanical Design, Materials and Manufacture

Taught postgraduate programmes

- MSc Human Factors
- MSc Manufacturing Engineering and Management
- MSc Manufacturing Systems
- MSc Surface Design and Engineering
- PgCert Applied Ergonomics (distance learning).

174 The BEng/MEng programmes in Mechanical Engineering are also delivered at the University's Malaysia Campus and took their first entry cohort in September 2004. The DAT focused on the MEng/BEng undergraduate programmes in Manufacturing Engineering and Management as examples of the courses provided in the School.

175 The DSED was written for the purposes of the audit and was accompanied by programme specifications for all of the courses with curriculum maps which demonstrated how the courses met the requirements of the *Subject benchmark statement* for engineering.

176 Programme specifications for all taught courses were prepared during 2003-04. They followed the University's revised format which, in particular, identified learning outcomes and their links with the FHEQ and the *Subject benchmark statement* for engineering. The use of curriculum maps is a means of checking and documenting where each learning outcome is taught, practised and assessed in the programmes. All undergraduate programmes are accredited and the content is aligned to the accreditation requirements of the relevant professional bodies. The MSc programmes are related to the relevant subject benchmark statements and have learning outcomes at master's level. In meetings, the audit team heard that the programme specifications were written with the primary purpose of enabling the formal approval of programmes by the University and that they were not used by students. The procedures for assuring the appropriateness of learning outcomes follow institutional guidelines.

177 Progression and completion data are available through the QDS. The data for the academic year 2003-04 have been subject to analysis by the School, examining trends against data from the previous year, and also comparing the data supplied at School level with those at faculty and University level.

178 The planning and assurance of the quality and standards of teaching and learning is delegated to the School's Studies Directorate. Teaching and learning are overseen by the School's Teaching Committee. Responsibility for the conduct of admissions, timetabling, examinations, European affairs, and teaching quality assurance is delegated by the Teaching Committee to small groups, typically consisting of three individuals who meet as and when required. This structure which is specific to this School and is not prescribed at institutional level was introduced shortly after the School was formed in 1998. The appropriateness of the overall integrated management structure was reviewed internally by the School in 2003 when it was concluded that the structure was effective and 'best suited the School's size and the needs and range of activities to be managed'. The Director of Research chairs the Research Affairs Group which manages aspects of the School's support for research students, including ensuring that progression assessments are completed for every researcher as set out in the University Quality Manual, monitoring completion rates, resolving complaints and supporting the postgraduate committee.

179 The School was subject to UQA in February 2003. In the DSED, the School expressed the view that 'the UQA process was effective in identifying

areas for improvement and the "lighter touch", with its reduced demand for extensive documentation, was appreciated'. Two features of good practice were identified, with four action points categorised as 'essential' and six categorised as 'advisable'. The UQA report was considered by the School's Teaching Committee and the School subsequently prepared an 'Action plan in response to the UQA' with proposed responses to all the points raised. The UQA report and the School's action plan were considered by the Teaching Quality Assurance Committee which noted the good practice identified. The audit team confirmed that procedures in the Quality Manual for follow-up to UQA reports had been followed.

180 There have not been any full course reviews since the continuation audit but the DSED indicated that 'A full course review of the MSc programmes [would] be completed early in 2005 and a review of the undergraduate programmes [would] be conducted by Easter 2005 in line with the University's five-year review cycle'. Neither report was available at the time of the audit visit. The use of external input into the review and development of both research and teaching activities is secured through the Industrial Academic Board.

181 An annual Course Review Meeting was held in January 2005 to consider the delivery of the Manufacturing Engineering undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the academic year 2003-04. The minutes of that meeting confirmed that consideration was given to the module review forms for the academic year 2003-04, SSCC minutes, courses procedures and documentation, external examiners' reports, programme specification, curriculum maps and the School's analysis of the QDS. The audit team formed the view that arrangements for internal monitoring and review as described in the institutional SED were working effectively in the School.

182 As noted, the BEng/MEng programmes in Mechanical Engineering are also delivered at the University's Malaysia Campus. The DSED stated '[t]here was close contact between staff at the University's Malaysia Campus during the planning for the introduction of the Mechanical Engineering programme there. In particular, the newly appointed Course Director [from Malaysia] spent two weeks at Nottingham meeting colleagues and discussing every aspect of the modules and the interaction between them'. A first cohort of 43 students enrolled on the Mechanical Engineering programme in Malaysia in 2004. The DSED contained no detail of the ongoing quality assurance of the course in

Malaysia but indicated that 'the Course Director of the mechanical courses in Nottingham [would] take on the specific responsibility to liaise with UNMC as proposed in the action plan'. The DSED continued '[r]egular contact continues and one of the UNMC staff attended the Mechanical Courses Committee meeting in December to discuss issues face to face'.

183 In meetings with staff, the audit team learned that the courses delivered in Malaysia had essentially the same module and programme specifications as the home provision, although requirements of the Malaysian National Accreditation Board and Ministry for Education necessitated some minor differences. Annual monitoring will use the same forms, but there will be separate annual review for the provision in Malaysia. Representatives of the teaching staff in Malaysia attend Course Committee meetings and there is provision for reciprocal student exchanges. Staff from the home provision are involved in the examination processes in Malaysia, with the same external examiner(s) appointed to confirm standards and comparability across the provision. The team was informed that laboratory provision would improve when the Malaysian campus was complete. It was also stated that the academic staff in Malaysia were expected to be research-active in due course, but that they were currently fully occupied with the implementation of the teaching course.

184 External examiners' reports express satisfaction with the thoroughness and rigour of the School's procedures. The external examiners' reports for the academic years 2002-03 and 2003-04 were the subject of formal written responses by the Undergraduate Course Director that contained appropriate responses to the points raised. The reports were considered by the School's Course Committee and the School's Examinations and Assessment Committee. External examiner comments were also discussed as part of the Annual Course Review for the academic year 2003-04. The audit team formed the view that the School's approach to external examiner reports was rigorous and operating as intended.

185 Information on assessment strategies and policies is contained within the programme specifications and the course handbooks and module information available to students. A wide variety of assessment methods is used, chosen to suit the content and intended learning outcomes of each module. Most use a combination of coursework set during the module and a written examination. The approaches are consistent with institutional strategies and the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*. The School's assessment and

progression requirements applied to all of the provision covered within the scope of the DAT.

186 The audit team considered samples of student work and confirmed that the expectations of the programme specifications had been satisfied. The work seen was consistent with the views of the external examiners. The team formed the view that the nature of the assessment and standard of student achievement met the expectations of the programme specifications and the *Subject benchmark statement* for engineering and were appropriate to the named awards and their location within the FHEQ.

187 Students receive a range of handbooks, including the introductory texts 'Welcome to the School of M3' and 'Information for Research Students 2004-5'. Each course has a handbook that provides undergraduate course information. In meetings, students confirmed the value of these sources of information and the use they made of them in obtaining information on assessment and progression. The students also praised the volume of information that was available on the website describing options and modules. They spoke in strong support of the Student Portal and the e-learning resources that they could access through that route.

188 Students whom the audit team met commented favourably on the quality of learning resources and support available to them and the newly developed facilities attracted particular praise. The availability of computers and access to websites and e-learning portals was also reported to be good. The staff reported their satisfaction with the way that the University had responded to their needs for up-to-date teaching and research facilities. The DSED indicated that a major investment in upgraded and new equipment was scheduled for the academic year 2005-06.

189 Each student has a personal tutor, part of whose role is to monitor the student's progression and to offer advice. In years one and two of the undergraduate programmes, there are tutorials every two weeks, for which the Senior Tutor makes available a common programme. In years three and four, the student's project supervisor also acts as the personal tutor. The system is similar for MSc students. In meetings with the audit team, students commented favourably on the success of the personal tutor system and the high number of contact hours available to them. The students also reported favourably on the assistance afforded them by the careers office.

190 The meeting with students indicated that there was no clear awareness of details of purpose of ePARS and consequently there was little use of

ePARS. There is, therefore, reason to believe that the objective of PARS 'in providing students with a framework for reviewing their personal and academic progress and linking these with their career plans after graduate' is not being fully met.

191 Examples of student feedback included the analyses of the SEM which contained statistical summaries and a commentary. In meetings with the audit team, the students reported that module descriptors often contained detail on what response had been made to feedback to the SEM received in the previous year. They commented favourably on the way that the School had addressed issues that had been raised in feedback, indicating that the School is responsive to student feedback. Student feedback on teaching quality is obtained from SET questionnaires. The forms are analysed independently by the Courses Office and returned to the lecturer, with a copy of the summary statistics going to the Head of School.

192 Each course (or group of related courses) at both MEng/BEng and MSc level has a SSCC that meets at least once each term to discuss matters relating to the course. The DSED pointed to the SSCCs as an important link in the quality control chain. Meetings are convened and chaired by either a student or a member of staff. Comments and suggestions raised are taken forward to the Annual Course Review meeting and responses are fed back to the next meeting. Where matters can be resolved immediately, they are dealt with by the Course Director, the relevant module convenor or the Director of Studies. Students whom the audit team met confirmed the effectiveness of the SSCC and that matters that were raised received appropriate attention. Examination of the minutes of SSCC meetings by the audit team suggested that most items referred to minor matters related to particular course modules. There is also a Postgraduate Committee which deals with matters concerning Research Students. One member of this Committee sits on the School's Research Advisory Group.

193 The audit team formed the view that the learning opportunities were appropriate to the named awards in the School of Mechanical, Materials and Manufacturing Engineering.

Pharmacy

194 The scope of the DAT was the School of Pharmacy and covered the following programmes:

- BSc Pharmaceutical Sciences
- Masters in Pharmacy (MPharm)
- MRes/MPhil/ PhD programme.

195 The DSED was written for the purposes of the audit and included programme specifications for the taught programmes which were referenced to the relevant subject benchmark statement. The programme learning outcomes, detailing knowledge, understanding and intellectual skills, were identified clearly in the programme specifications. The MPharm includes a mandatory practice learning element and the associated professional practice skills were well articulated and in line with the subject benchmarks.

196 The School of Pharmacy has 29 academic staff, incorporating eight Professors, four Readers, five Senior Lecturers and 12 Lecturers. The DSED stated that the School had a 'thriving research community' of approximately 40 contract researchers and 125 postgraduate students.

197 In 2001, the School entered an arrangement with Srinakharinwirot University (SWU) in Thailand for students to enter year three of the MPharm with advanced standing. The DSED indicated that the arrangement was 'suspended' in response to concerns in the School and expressed by external examiners about 'the progression of these students through the MPharm course'. Staff whom the audit team met during the audit visit confirmed that students who needed to complete their studies were being supported by the School. The DSED stated that the School aimed to offer the MPharm on the University's campus in Malaysia from the autumn of 2005. In meetings, the team heard details of the School's plans and commitment to ensuring quality of provision in Malaysia through direct control by the School of its operation.

198 The DSED indicated that the School used QDS to monitor admissions and trends in student progression and completion. This was substantiated by evidence seen by the audit team in the course of the audit visit and from discussion with staff. Data seen by the team supported the claim in the DSED of high progression rates and student attainment in achieving programme aims.

199 The School was subject to UQA in the academic year 2003-04, by a panel with external representation in its membership. The report identified some matters for action, none of which was deemed 'essential'. The report was considered by the School's Teaching Committee and an action plan answering the points raised was devised. The School was subject to a successful accreditation visit by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain in November 2001.

200 The DSED pointed to a variety of means used by the School to monitor and review its provision,

including SEM, module review panels, annual course review and course review. Evidence seen by the audit team indicated that the School took all reasonable steps to monitor the quality of its provision.

201 External examiner reports are distributed to teaching team groups for consideration and comment on any matters raised. The Course Director is responsible for preparing a response on behalf of the Head of School, and Teaching Committee monitors the implementation of the resultant action plans. From scrutiny of responses to external examiner reports and evidence of effective action taken in response, the audit team was able to confirm that the School's approach to external examiners reports was timely and operating as intended.

202 The DSED set out the School's approach to assessment which includes a blend of summative and formative methods. Assessment methods are varied and include written assignments and laboratory practical examinations and were in line with the programme specifications. The School has designed and published additional assessment guidelines in the areas of compensation and moderation to take account of the requirements of the practice and professional elements of the provision; these include the exclusion of compensation for the practice elements. In line with normal University practice, students receive feedback on coursework but not on examinations. Undergraduate students whom the audit team met were satisfied with the timing of notification of results to them. The School assessment strategy, policies and procedures met the University expectations in this area.

203 Student work seen by the audit team matched the expected standard of achievement set out in the programme specification and reports from external examiners also confirmed the congruence of student attainment with the expectations set in the School. The team concluded that the standard of achievement was appropriate to the title of the awards and their location in the FHEQ.

204 The student handbooks indicated clearly the School's expectations of the students and its approaches in the areas of learning and assessment. The handbooks and local website were of high quality, informative, and engaging. In meetings with the audit team, students stated that their expectations of study prior to arriving at the University had been borne out by their subsequent learning experience. The team considered that the website and student handbook were praiseworthy for the provision of clear and comprehensive information, exceeding the requirements of the Quality Manual.

205 Both the programme specification and the DSED referred to the 'high quality' of student support and learning resources. In meetings with the audit team, undergraduate students indicated that availability and accessibility of library texts and computer access were satisfactory. The undergraduate students also commented positively on the use of web-based learning. The SCRIP software, a computer based learning object to help incorporate the realities of practice into the University environment, was highlighted as an example of this.

206 The postgraduate students whom the audit team met were content with the level and quality of supervision they received, identifying more closely with the School than the University Graduate School. There was some dissatisfaction with their allocated computer access, suggesting this as an area where improvement was required. The team noted that this was an area highlighted in the UQA of the School and featured in the action plan in response to the UQA

207 The DSED described the School's approach to gathering student feedback, which included the standard University processes of SET and SEM and through the SSCC. Students whom the audit team met confirmed that SSCC meetings were advertised in advance and that minutes and actions arising from the meetings were posted on the School website. In meetings, staff indicated to the team that the School adopted a proactive approach to anticipate potential tensions or issues of student concern. The team heard that matters raised at the SSCC were discussed by staff both through formal structures and informal arrangements in the School. The Chair of the SSCC mediates between staff and students on matters discussed in the SSCC to seek a resolution satisfactory to all parties. In meetings, the team heard from both undergraduate and postgraduate students of the School's responsiveness to student feedback. An example cited by the students was a prompt response and corrective action in respect of an instance of delay in feedback to coursework.

208 The School operates the PARs system, seeing it as a 'valuable link' in preparing students for the requirement for practicing pharmacists to produce evidence of continuing professional development; students whom the audit team met confirmed that they saw a direct relevance between PARs and their future professional requirements. The DSED indicated that in view of 'some reservation among staff and students regarding the operation and purposes of PARs' the School was evaluating PARS and considering a move to ePARs.

209 The DSED described the School's approach to links with employers. In meetings with staff, the audit team heard details of the School's creative approach to working with employers to ensure that the reality of work was incorporated into the students' studies. The School uses joint appointments with NHS Trusts to establish Teacher Practitioners and, at the time of the audit, was considering establishing the role of Clinical Teacher. The role descriptions for these posts seen by the team demonstrated that the School was developing partnership working with local employers. The team considered the proposed use of the Clinical Teacher role to be noteworthy for its innovative approach to the provision of support for student learning.

210 The audit team formed the view that the School of Pharmacy recognised the value of good teaching as evidenced by its securing one of the University's Lord Dearing Awards for five out of the six years of implementation. The School manages an effective balance of research-informed, high quality teaching. The team formed the view that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for programme of study leading to the named awards in the School of Pharmacy.

Politics

211 The scope of the DAT was the School of Politics and covered the following programmes:

Undergraduate provision

- BA Hons Politics
- BA Hons European Politics

The politics element of the following programmes:

- BA Hons Politics and American Studies
- BA Hons Politics and American Studies (International Study)

Postgraduate provision

- L203 MA Political Science
- Political Theory (Research Track)
- MA Asia and Pacific Studies
- MA International Relations
- International Relations (Research Track)
- MA Comparative Politics (Research Track)
- MA Comparative Politics: Transitions and State Development
- MA Diplomacy
- MA Politics and Social Policy
- MA Politics and Contemporary History

- MA in International Security and Terrorism (to be offered from September 2005).

212 The DSED was prepared for the purposes of the audit and the School also intended to use the document in preparation for its forthcoming internal review. Programme specifications and curriculum maps were appended for all the honours level and postgraduate programmes but not for interim awards or ordinary degrees. In meetings, it was confirmed to the audit team that generic statements were made at the institutional level for certificates and diplomas and the Quality Manual indicated that 'if an undergraduate student [was] unable to complete their degree course they [might] be eligible for a certificate or diploma of the University, provided they [had] passed the sufficient number of credits'. The programme specifications were referenced to the relevant subject benchmark statements. The curriculum maps contribute to transparency of the assessment procedures by mapping knowledge and skills on to teaching, learning and assessment. The programme specifications for the undergraduate joint honours programmes with American Studies make reference to the responsibilities of both Schools. The programme specifications have sections that relate to assessment and student support in learning within the School and at University level including the policy towards students with disabilities.

213 The process of developing the programme specifications was explicit and engaged academic staff at all levels and in a variety of ways, from module tutors, through teaching teams and School committees including the SSCC. The DSED set out the committee structure for managing the School provision and outlined the key role of School committee 'and its attendant sub-committees' for adherence to the University's quality assurance policies. The Curriculum Committee owns the process of School-level approval and quality control. The Teaching Committee is responsible for matters relating to the quality of teaching, the response to student evaluation and the examination process.

214 The School makes use of the QDS information which is analysed and reported to the School's Curriculum Committee, to the Student Affairs Committee and to School Committee. The QDS for the academic year 2003-04 showed a 96 per cent completion rate and a high degree classification achievement rate. The DSED attributes the success of students in terms of completion to its capacity to engage students in appropriate forms of assessment. A concern about the demographic intake of the student body and the under-representation of

overseas students compared with the wider University was identified and planned action suggested. Annual course monitoring is an ongoing process rather than a single event.

215 The School uses SEM and SET in accordance with normal University procedures. The SEMs and SETs are analysed regularly and discussed in the Teaching Committee and reviewed in the Curriculum Committee and feed into the annual course monitoring. SET and SEM summaries are produced for each module. The School of Politics was reviewed for the period 1996 to 2001 and will be experiencing periodic review later in 2005.

216 The School's approach to external examining follows the procedures set out in the University's Quality Manual. External examiners moderate examination questions and see essay questions, examination questions having first been reviewed by the Teaching Committee. It appeared to the audit team that there was no explicit use of learning outcomes in moderation and external examining; the School may wish to consider whether there might be merit in drawing specifically on the learning outcomes in its monitoring of examination processes. External examiner reports confirm the standards of student work and the attainment of the students. The team saw evidence of effective responses to matters raised by external examiners. By way of example, in response to comment about the imprecise nature of the criteria used to consider actions with respect to borderline candidates, procedures were reviewed and actions made explicit. In addition, the Schools 'critical review' of borderline and other candidates, including any potential First class candidates, illustrated a concern for careful decision making in the examinations context.

217 The DSED stated that the School's learning and teaching strategy centred on 'a commitment to innovation in teaching to ensure that students received a wide range of learning experiences'. The programme specifications for undergraduate programmes detail a range of assessments, including: essays; book reviews; reading journals; oral presentations; short answer examination questions; unseen examinations; responses to texts and an optional dissertation. There is a similar range of assessments for the taught postgraduate programmes.

218 From the programme specifications and from the samples of assessed work, it was clear to the audit team that the School had an assessment strategy that was matched to elements set out in the statement of knowledge and skills. Knowledge is explicitly tested

through a range of assessment methods and skills are tested both implicitly and explicitly. The explicit testing of skills is being extended by a new Research Methods module being introduced in the second year of the undergraduate programmes. Students are supplied with module information that defines the learning outcomes, outlines the syllabus and the reading list and the methods of assessment and their weighting and other relevant information in compliance with the Quality Manual. Marking schemes, Examination Protocols and Assessment Schemes for oral presentations are all in place and available to students in the relevant Handbooks. The skills engaged with during seminar presentations are assessed and adequate information recorded to enable an external examiner to reach conclusions about the quality of the work produced. In meetings with the team, a minority of students expressed concerns about variations in marking across the School. Discussion during the meeting with staff showed that the School took advantage of the capacity to examine results across modules and that the School was satisfied that there was no evidence to indicate significant levels of variability. At the time of the audit one module was under investigation. The statistical analysis of module results is carried out by the Teaching Committee. The School may wish to consider making the findings of such analyses available to students.

219 Politics lends itself as a subject readily to the idea of knowledge development and application to contingent events. The School makes good use of this with respect to teaching and assessment opportunities. In meetings with the audit team, students expressed satisfaction with the fact that teaching was related to real life events and with the integration of theoretical knowledge and historical circumstance or practice. A few students expressed the view, that the treatment of the skills agenda was 'very lecturer dependent' rather than policy-led.

220 The School has paid considerable attention to the nature and role of assessments on its programmes of study. The nature and range of assessments was illustrated in the documentary evidence supplied. Work was seen that showed examples of assessments that help students demonstrate and utilise knowledge in a variety of settings from both undergraduate and postgraduate contexts. The work confirmed that students could deepen their knowledge of a topic by starting in one context, for example an undergraduate essay, and follow through into other contexts such as an examination question and dissertation. The claim made in the DSED that students were helped to 'demonstrate and utilise

knowledge in a variety of settings' is one that is supported by the evidence.

221 Samples of student work seen by the audit team had been evaluated positively by external examiners and was in line with expectations set out in the module learning outcomes and programme specifications. The team concluded that the standard of student achievement was appropriate to the title of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

222 There is a variety of student handbooks: one each at undergraduate and postgraduate taught level and, in addition, dissertation handbooks for the undergraduate programmes and the postgraduate taught programmes. In meetings with the audit team, students spoke positively about the handbooks which go beyond the requirements of the Quality Manual. There are useful dialogue boxes in which the expectations for staff and students are set out in a variety of contexts. There are in addition simple flow charts illustrating how student concerns can be addressed before the concern becomes a complaint. The School handbook is supplemented by detailed module information guides that include assignments, weekly session details, reading lists and contact details. Students whom the team met indicated that while learning outcomes were stated, delivery of the curriculum was content and interest led, matching their expectations of the nature of their learning experience.

223 The dissertation handbook at undergraduate level is audience-aware, readable and informative. It contains a variety of material including advice on common problems experienced in working towards a dissertation and states the expectations of the supervisor's role and the student's role in the student/supervisor relationship.

224 Postgraduate students are given opportunities to teach and in this they are supported by the Law and Social Sciences Teaching Circle. Topics scheduled for meetings of the Teaching Circle for the academic year 2004-05 included marking examination questions; group dynamics and getting students to participate.

225 New students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level participate in a series of induction activities for one week at the start of their studies. Students whom the audit team met spoke positively of the induction process and confirmed that they receive good pre-arrival information about the University. The students also stated that they had had expectations concerning a high quality of teaching, the scope for independent learning and for learning in a research-led environment and that these were fulfilled. Postgraduate research students

confirmed to the team that they had excellent support, including contact with staff and access to personal space and computers.

226 Overall, students whom the audit team met expressed satisfaction with the provision of library and IT resources but there was some concern about library provision in relation to support for final year undergraduate dissertations and for the maintenance of an appropriate set of resources in short loan. The quality of e-journal access for Politics was evaluated positively by students. The School's priority is to support face-to-face teaching backed by independent learning. VLEs are used in a supportive and blended role rather than on the exclusive basis of an online learning community.

227 The majority of students whom the audit team met spoke positively about the learning support available to them, describing staff as 'open, supportive, enthusiastic, and engaged in cutting-edged teaching'. By contrast, a minority of students considered that some staff were distant and that feedback was poor and variable. In meetings with the team, staff indicated that students were treated as 'adults' and that the onus was on the students to seek additional support as necessary. Given that not all students appeared satisfied with the support available, the team would encourage the School to review its approach to the provision of learning support to confirm that it is responsive to the differing maturity and development of students and the consequent range in the level of support required.

228 The School stated in the DSED that 'the ePARS system [was] in the process of being rolled out across the School's intake cohorts'. Students whom the audit team met were not familiar with ePARs and the team gained the impression that the system was not yet embedded in the School.

229 The SSCC operates in accordance with the requirements of the Quality Manual and meets more often than the minimum suggested therein. Chairing rotates between staff and student members. In meetings with the audit team, students confirmed the effectiveness of the SSCC and it was clear to the team that issues were given due consideration and fed into other committees as necessary. The minutes of SSCC meetings do not record action points but students whom the team met were satisfied that action was taken in response to matters that they raised. There was less certainty concerning decisions on matters raised by students that had led to change. The team saw evidence that the School consulted students on proposals for new procedures. Students are also represented on School committees.

230 The DSED highlighted the educational ambitions of the School which are 'to produce graduates with a knowledge and understanding of their discipline; to equip them with the analytical and methodological skills to make informed judgments about approaches to the study of their discipline; to provide a range of courses which satisfy the varied interests of students and enable choice between specialist modules which reflect the research interests of staff; to ensure that students receive training opportunities appropriate to their level of qualification'. Overall, from documentary evidence and meetings with staff and students, the audit team formed the view that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was good, research informed, and evaluated positively in the main by students and external examiners alike. The quality of learning opportunities is suitable for the programmes of study leading to the named awards in the School of Politics.

Thematic enquiries

231 The audit team did not select any areas for thematic enquiry.

Section 4: The audit investigations: published information

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

232 The University provided the audit team with its Prospectus for Undergraduate Study, Prospectus for Postgraduate Study and the University Calendar. In the course of the DATs the team also reviewed course handbooks and module descriptors. The University makes much of its written material, including the regulatory frameworks and a useful guide to their use, available on its website.

233 The availability, usefulness and accuracy of the published information were discussed with students at the briefing meeting and during the DATs. The SWS indicated that the majority of students were satisfied with the accuracy of the information they received about the University and their courses.

234 Areas identified by the students where additional information in the prospectus might be helpful included specification of additional costs for materials and equipment incurred by students following course such as Architecture. In general, students welcomed the University's moves towards supplying web-based information, but pointed to the need to ensure that such material was updated frequently

and that provision of material electronically led to additional printing costs for the students.

235 Students whom the audit team met confirmed that information at institutional, course and module level was satisfactory. Few students referred to programme specifications as a source of information. The students were confident that they could find the information they required about assessment and progression requirements, complaints and appeals procedures. Overall, the students considered the information provided by the University to be comprehensive, accurate and accessible.

236 The SED stated that '[t]he University [was] confident of the accuracy and completeness of its qualitative data. This was evidenced through the monitoring of University processes for assuring qualitative data such as the University Quality Audit and the work of the Academic Boards'. The University's policy as stated in the Quality Manual is that the delivering school is responsible for the provision of course and module information although some items of information are subject to University approval through the academic boards or equivalent. The Quality Manual contains explicit guidance on when and how course information for new courses can be published. In meetings, the audit team heard that the Senior Tutors' Network had gathered copies of the course handbooks from each school in order to compare provision and to identify and disseminate best practice. The remit of the Recruitment and Admissions Committee includes a requirement to 'ensure that appropriate means are in place to ensure that information published by the University for applicants and potential applicants is accurate and reliable'.

237 The report of the continuation audit stated that the University might wish to consider the desirability of 'centrally exercising more direct oversight of the material produced in its name which describes courses leading to awards of the University, and to consider more overt monitoring of the material produced by schools, particularly during the annual course review process'. In its response to the recommendation, the University indicated that because of the 'large scale and organisational complexity' that it would not introduce formal central approval mechanisms for school-based publicity material. Nevertheless the Marketing Unit provides guidance to schools on best practice, with a contact for advice if a school needs help in this area. The University also anticipates that the work being undertaken to make programme specifications available in a suitable form on the web will enable the University to authenticate

school-produced information. UQA reviews such information and checks its accuracy.

238 The audit team found that the web-based information on courses mounted by the schools was comprehensive and accurate, but with some differences between schools in format and content. In meetings, the team heard that a Content Management System for school information that the University anticipated would greatly enhance the consistency of information available would be implemented in May 2005. It is planned that 15 schools adopt the new system in May 2005 with the remaining schools following in a further six months time.

239 From meetings with students and staff at institutional level and in the DATs, the audit team formed the view that the adoption of PARS and ePARS across Schools had been variable and was not consistent with the statement in the University's Undergraduate Prospectus. In addition, as, at the time of the audit, only a limited number of students had been able to undertake full-time study at one of the other partner universities of the Universitas 21 consortium, the team agreed with the view expressed in the SWS that the statement in the prospectus that 'Universitas 21 offers you the perfect opportunity to live, study and travel overseas', could be deemed to be misleading. The team noted that this statement had been appropriately qualified in the on-line prospectus and the draft printed prospectus by the time of the audit visit

240 Notwithstanding the discrepancies noted above, the audit team formed the view that the University was committed to supplying accurate information to students and had in place suitable procedures to achieve that aim. Significant effort has been expended in making information available on websites and the ease of access to this information is appreciated by students. Schools are responsible for the information that is mounted on the web about their courses and the team noted some inconsistencies in the details provided about the provision; the team formed the view that the forthcoming introduction of a content management system would further enhance the quality of the provision of information by encouraging greater consistency in approach. The team concluded that the University's approach to the provision of comprehensive and accessible information was a feature of good practice and provided students with good support for their studies at the University.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

241 At the time of the audit, the University had published the required information on the TQI and HERO websites in accordance with the prescribed timetables. The SED set out the procedure for compilation and publication of qualitative data: 'individual unit heads are responsible for populating and maintaining relevant sections of the HERO TQI website, whilst the process is overseen by the Quality and Standards Team'. There are no central mechanisms for ensuring the currency, accuracy and reliability of information in this context, but the SED stated that '[t]he University [was] confident of the accuracy and completeness of its qualitative data. This is evidenced through the monitoring of University processes for assuring qualitative data such as the University Quality Audit and the work of the Academic Boards'.

242 Referring to the quantitative data, the SED also stated: '[t]he University is confident of the accuracy and completeness of its HESA data. This is evidenced by the following: HEFCE undertakes a comparison of HESA data with the (HESES) [Higher Education Students Early Statistics] return. This rarely, if ever, raises significant issues and any mismatches are always explicable by the comparison methodology and not any problem with the underlying data. The University's student record-keeping and analysis for the HESES return was subject to a HEFCE audit in January 2002 and no problem was identified'. Inspection by the audit team of the audit report of the HESES 2001 confirmed that issues raised were limited to 'housekeeping items to improve the accuracy of the data'.

243 The audit team found that the University had put in place satisfactory systems to generate and post the *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance* (HEFCE 03/51) information set on the TQI website. Comparison of the written full external examiners' reports seen in the DATs with the versions posted on the TQI website supported confidence in the University's commitment to ensuring reliability, accuracy and completeness in its published information. At the time of the audit, the information available for each course was consistent across all courses.

244 The audit team was satisfied that the University was engaging appropriately with the recommendations of HEFCE 02/15 and of HEFCE 03/51 and had satisfied its relevant responsibilities. The team was also satisfied that the information that the University was currently publishing about its programmes and standards was accurate and reliable.

Findings

Findings

245 An institutional audit of the University of Nottingham (the University) was undertaken during the week 7 to 11 March 2005. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the University's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility as a UK degree-awarding body. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Standing Conference of Principals and Universities UK, four discipline audit trails (DATs) were selected for scrutiny. This section of the report of the audit summarises the findings of the audit. It concludes by identifying features of good practice that emerged from the audit, and recommendations to the University for enhancing current practice.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

246 The Senate has the overriding responsibility to assure, maintain and enhance the academic quality of courses leading to awards of the University. In practice, the responsibility is discharged on its behalf by one of its major committees, the Teaching Committee. The Teaching Committee and its subcommittees for Taught Courses and Research Degrees have significant roles in formulating strategy and developing policy. The two academic boards, for Humanities and for Science and Engineering and the Faculty for Medicine and Health Sciences are formally consulted about policy development and their subcommittees are responsible for implementing the procedures which give effect to agreed policies. Procedures for the assurance of the quality of programmes are set out in a web-based Quality Manual; the audit team noted that these procedures applied across campuses to all of the University's provision, including that delivered overseas and by distance and e-learning.

247 The audit team noted some discrepancies between the responsibilities and powers exercised by these committees and boards in fulfilment of their terms of reference, and the formal position regarding the Senate's responsibilities and powers, and the manner in which they may be delegated, as expressed in the statutes of the University. It considered that in order to minimise the differences between practice and principle, and to ensure that the Senate's delegated responsibilities and powers are being exercised in the way that it would wish, the University might wish to consider ways in which the terms of reference of its committees can be better aligned with the statutory position.

248 Course approval is managed by programme committees on behalf of academic boards. Schools proposing new courses complete standard proposal forms, and provide programme specifications, together with a curriculum map. The introduction and use of the new University of Nottingham Qualifications Framework will, in the view of the audit team, assist programme committees in the discharge of their responsibility to academic boards, and assure the University, that academic standards are being maintained and that suitable learning opportunities are being provided to enable students to meet those standards. The team noted the lack of a formal mechanism whereby the Senate, which has the ultimate responsibility to set, maintain and assure standards, can monitor the exercise of the course approval powers which it has delegated to academic boards, and considered that the University's arrangements would benefit from clarification of the manner in which the accountability of the committees and boards involved in course approval for the roles they exercise on behalf of the Senate is demonstrated.

249 Annual monitoring is school-owned and involves the collection and consideration of quantitative data about students' progression and achievement, and qualitative data concerning the views expressed by students, and the comments of external examiners. The aim of the process is to ensure that risks to quality or standards are identified and attended to promptly. Although the process is continuing to develop in the light of experience, the University is satisfied that this aim is met. The audit team, having considered the evidence made available in the DATs, was able to endorse this view.

250 The University requires periodic reviews of courses, and undertakes periodic university quality audits (UQA) of schools' provision for learning and teaching, the course review process being curriculum-focused and school-owned, and the quality audit process being concerned with assuring compliance of provision with the Quality Manual and on the identification of good practice. The two processes are intended to complement each other and to provide between them a comprehensive means for maintaining academic standards, and for assuring and enhancing the quality of students' opportunities. It was not clear to the audit team that the limitations of either process were altogether compensated by the strengths of the other. The team took the view, therefore, that as the University continues to reflect on its experience of course reviews and quality audit, it may wish to give further thought to the ways the two processes operate together to provide

comprehensive, reliable and impartial assurances about academic standards and quality.

251 Both periodic review of courses and UQA for schools draw on advice from persons external to the University. There is no formal stipulation that the external advisers appointed to panels do not have current or recent responsibilities regarding courses. In UQA of the quality assurance arrangements of provision on the Malaysia Campus, independent external advice was not been used. The University indicated that, because of the wide scope of that provision, and because the components of that provision would in due course be included in the UQA of the schools responsible, it had not been judged appropriate to make use of such advice. In the self-evaluation document (SED), the University stated that UQA and course review needed to be seen as a 'duality' and that having a 'a measure of externality in both processes [gave] the University greater confidence that equal rigour was occurring in both processes and that they [were] each informed by expectations external to the University'. The audit team noted and endorses the view expressed in the SED that independent external advice offered a 'fresh perspective' and considers that the University's approach to review of its provision would benefit from a broadening of the use of external advice. Accordingly, the team advises the University, in developing its policies and procedures for periodic review and audit, to ensure the consistent application and implementation of systematic and uniform requirements for the inclusion of independent advisers external to the University in the membership of all panels.

252 The Quality and Standards Team maintains a central register of all courses with professional statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) accreditation. Reports from PSRBs and other external agencies are considered at school level and forwarded to academic boards with an action plan in response to recommendations in the reports. Outcomes of reviews at the subject level by QAA are reported to Teaching Committee, again with an action plan. The audit team saw documentary evidence that the procedures for the consideration of reports from external agencies, including PSRBs, were operating as intended at school level. It was less clear how enhancement and dissemination of good practice was being achieved through action planning and liaison with the Staff and Educational Development Unit (SEDU) and the University may wish to consider action to strengthen the mechanisms for disseminating the good practice identified in those reports. The team concluded that the process for the

consideration of PSRB reports was comprehensive and appropriate, and made a positive contribution to assurance of quality and standards at school level.

253 The University has a variety of mechanisms for obtaining feedback from students, including Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) and Student Evaluation of Modules (SEM), both of which operate across all schools, and the annual Student Satisfaction Survey. SEM is optional but SET is compulsory for all staff with teaching responsibilities. The University is considering formalising the operation of SEM to ensure that it operates consistently across the University. Consideration is also being given to online central administration of SEM and SET. Students are represented on major University Committees, including Senate, Teaching Committee, Student Services Committee and their associated sub-committees. Students also participate in UQA as auditors as well as members of the schools being audited. There is a University requirement that all schools operate Staff Student Consultative Committees (SSCC), guidance for which is included in the Quality Manual. The audit team considers the University's approach to student representation which promotes active involvement in University's processes at all levels in the institution to be a feature of good practice.

254 The SED identified the Centre for Career Development (CCD) as the main vehicle for securing feedback from employers but indicated that schools also had their own means of gaining such feedback. One mechanism, where there is a 'clear career path for the graduates from a School', is for representative employers to serve on an advisory board. The CCD undertakes a series of visits to employers to discuss their recruitment needs and provides feedback from the employers to individual Schools to 'influence the nature of academic provision'. Schools are expected to gather feedback from employers for consideration in course review. The SED did not provide any information on how it collected the views of its graduates but it is a requirement in course review that schools seek feedback from graduates.

255 The SED stated that the University 'place[d] great value in the feedback it received from various stakeholders and [took] action accordingly'. The SED also highlighted SET as a 'powerful way to assure the quality of teaching' and evaluated the scheme as 'effective without becoming burdensome'. The University has identified a need to collect SET information from distance and e-learning.

256 The SED stated that the University had taken the decision that collaboration as expressed through validation and other similar activity was not

appropriate as a strategic goal. The University's only existing collaborative validated arrangement is with St John's College, a theological college. The University also operates two joint awards, one joint programme, and three articulation agreements.

257 The Quality Manual sets out procedures for the operation of collaborative provision, including a guide for producing memoranda of agreement. Oversight of the operation of collaborative provision, including monitoring and review, is exercised by the Collaborative Courses Committee (CCC). The audit team noted that, contrary to policy set by the CCC, agreements governing the operation of collaborative provision did not always forbid serial arrangements for programmes leading to awards of the University nor did they always include arrangements for the approval of publicity material. The audit team found no evidence of serial arrangements occurring or misleading publicity material being produced; nonetheless, to avoid a potential risk to quality and standards, the team advises the University to ensure that formal agreements for the operation of collaborative arrangements preclude serial arrangements for provision leading to awards of the University and also include a means for the University to approve all information produced by collaborating partners for publicity purposes.

258 The University has a growing amount of overseas provision. At the time of the audit, the major provision overseas was the University's campus in Malaysia but a major development was the planned establishment of a campus in China. The University uses its standard course approval, monitoring, review and UQA processes for provision on its overseas campuses. Each part of that provision is the responsibility of a school, and in exercising that responsibility schools are required to follow the procedures set out in the Quality Manual. Thus, the programme committees of academic boards consider new courses proposed for the overseas campuses. Schools monitor annually the courses they provide on the overseas campuses, and undertake periodic reviews of those courses. When schools are subject to UQA their activity on overseas campuses is included in the process. In addition, the University has undertaken a UQA of the provision on the Malaysia campus in order to assure itself that its expectations regarding the quality of the courses provided there are being met.

259 The audit team formed the view that as the University's provision on its overseas campuses grows, current policies and procedures for the management of quality and standards may become more difficult and onerous to implement,

particularly with regard to ensuring that the views of the students and staff on the campuses are taken into account. It therefore considers it desirable for the University to keep under review the continuing appropriateness of its policies and procedures for the management of the quality and standards of its awards offered through such arrangements.

260 In the SED, the University stated that its 'primary aim for learning and teaching [was] to sustain and continuously to improve the high quality of educational provision across all its campuses', tying this aim to fulfilment of the University Plan and implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The University adopts a devolved approach to quality management, locating primary responsibility with heads of schools. Among the benefits of this approach identified in the SED were 'better teaching and enhanced learning opportunities for students' and, 'responsible engagement in the management of key processes by those most directly involved "at the coal face"'. The SED also pointed to the risk that 'students from different schools [might] be treated differently for insufficient reason'. The Quality Manual was highlighted as a key vehicle for ensuring that Schools 'were conscious' of central requirements and were able to put in place 'local arrangements for implementing University policies and procedures'.

261 From documentary evidence and meetings with staff and students, the audit team concluded that the SED provided an accurate account of the University's procedures for assuring the quality of programmes. The team concluded that there could be broad confidence in the soundness of the University's current present and likely future management of the quality of its courses of study.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards

262 The SED identified the external examiner system as one of the fundamental means by which the standard of awards and qualifications was assured. The University's policies and procedures in relation to external examining are set out in the Quality Manual. External examiners approve assessment material, moderate a sample of scripts, conduct oral examinations where necessary and attend examinations boards at which the final assessment of candidates' performance is made. External examiners report on the standards of awards of the University in relation to their experience of equivalent awards at other institutions, and to *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), relevant

subject benchmark standards, and University programme specifications. The University also asks external examiners to comment in their reports on curriculum aims and design, assessment and examination procedures, students' performance as a cohort and in relation to external reference points including comparable courses elsewhere, and the quality of learning and teaching methods which may be indicated by student performance; they are also encouraged to draw attention in particular to any good practice, or areas requiring attention. Guidance on external examiners' duties specified in the Quality Manual is not yet aligned with the reporting requested in the University's external examiner report form. From documentary evidence, the audit team concluded that procedures for consideration of and response to external examiners' reports were fit for purpose appropriate and operating as intended.

263 The audit team noted concerns raised by external examiners about lack of clarity in approaches to the classification of joint honours degrees that had been considered by the Assessment and Progression Committee of Taught Courses Committee. In meetings, the team was informed that schools would be advised of the need to update their programme specifications for all joint honours programmes to specify: which degree classification algorithm applied to the conversion of marks to classes; where the marks boundary for identifying a candidate as borderline fell, and how the degree classification of such borderline candidates would be decided. Schools will also be reminded of the need to ensure that their examination board processes allow for proper consideration of all joint honours candidates.

264 Since the academic year 2002-03, schools have been provided with annual Quantitative Data Sets (QDS) providing statistical data on student admissions and intake standards, progression and completion. Schools reflect annually on both quantitative and qualitative information as part of their annual monitoring process, and are required to provide a written assessment of the value of this information and resulting actions for use within the School. The QDS methodology is also reviewed annually taking account of feedback solicited from both Schools and relevant committees.

265 The audit team saw evidence in the DATs and at University level of how the use of QDS data is developing to monitor student achievement against expected internal and external norms, to improve and target student support, and to track University recruitment against national trends. On the basis of

this evidence, the team concluded that the University was making appropriate and effective use of statistical data in the management of quality and standards.

266 The SED indicated that the maintenance of high standards for all its awards depended on the 'exercise of academic judgement on the basis of relevant evidence, guided by appropriate policies and supported by effective procedures and systems'. Overall, the audit team found that the University's external examiner system was robust and provided an effective means of monitoring standards and identifying both good practice and matters for attention. Arrangements for the assessment of students and external examining operate in accordance with the relevant sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA. The team noted the concerns raised by external examiners in relation to the assessment of joint honours students and would advise the University, in taking action to answer the concerns, to ensure equity of assessment for all students by: the establishment and maintenance of effective monitoring of assessment schemes for joint honours students with particular reference to consistency in the regulations for borderline classifications, and the coordination of the scheduling of examination boards where joint honours students are considered. Notwithstanding this recommendation, the findings of the audit confirm that there can be broad confidence in the University's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for supporting learning

267 Responsibility for supporting learning lies principally with the schools, through the tutorial system, backed up by a network of specialist services which, at the time of the audit, had recently been gathered under one roof, delivered by the Student Services section. SEDU also provides support for learning as part of its enhancement strategy. At postgraduate level, there is an integrated Graduate School, which provides generic training opportunities for postgraduates through the Graduate Research Training Programme. SEDU works with the Graduate School to provide training for postgraduate students and Contract Research Staff who teach. Monitoring of the effectiveness of these processes rests with UQA.

268 The Quality Manual includes a Policy on Personal and Academic Student Support. Staff in schools are the initial point of contact for students in

both academic and personal matters. Each school has a senior tutor; the senior tutors are linked in a Senior Tutors' Network presided over by the University Senior Tutor. The University has recognised that observation of the policy across Schools is variable.

269 The University operates both a Personal Academic Records System (PARS), and an electronic version of this (e-PARS). From meetings with staff and students and scrutiny of documentation, the audit team gained the impression that implementation of PARS and e-PARS varied between schools. At the time of the audit, the system was under review, with a new system, e-PORTFOLIO, being developed to allow students to track their progress from admission to career opportunities. The University is aiming to establish a system that will allow students remote access to University systems from all campuses.

270 The University has a Disability Policy which is supported by a network of Disability Liaison Officers. A HEFCE-funded Disability Project involves schools with issues around disability, dyslexia and mental health, and includes a Diversity Taskforce which draws its membership from across the University community. The University's approach to work in this area is a particularly noteworthy feature.

271 Information Services (IS) is an integrated library and information technology (IT) service that aims to provide 'high-quality services relevant to the needs of the University community'. The IS Services Strategy governs the operation of IS and is the responsibility of the Strategy Group for Information Services. The SED pointed to the IS Service Statement and the associated planning arrangements as a recent major initiative in support of quality management.

272 The Library provides loan services including short loan, inter-library loan as well as on-line reading lists. IT Services provides support to students through a network of Information Services Computer Resource Areas (ISCRAS) and Teaching ISCRAS (TISCRAS). The SED noted the initiative, known as 'eNottingham', to 'web enable' the University and the development of portals for the various University communities. The audit team considered that the Student portal represented good practice in the provision of seamless access to a variety of e-learning resources. IS gathers feedback from users through a range of surveys and through discussion in the Library Advisory Board and the Faculty Library Users' Groups. The team formed the view that, overall, IS were providing effective support for student learning.

273 The SED stated that the University's objective was to recruit, retain and motivate high-quality academic staff who engaged in high-quality research, scholarship and teaching at national and international level. SEDU, operates under guidance for EDAG 'to provide a range of staff and educational development services to assist staff in developing the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver the University's aims', including support for implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The team heard evidence that teaching was an activity valued at all stages of a staff member's career; one specific feature is the Lord Dearing Awards, which are made to staff on the grounds of teaching and/or teaching support activities and which can feed directly into the promotions process.

274 The Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education is compulsory for all new lecturers on probation. The course is externally accredited by the Higher Education Academy. The Associate Teachers Programme is provided by SEDU for staff who support teaching or who have a part time contract. This provision is noteworthy for its contribution to securing the commitment of all staff to the enhancement of provision.

275 The University was commended in the report of the continuation audit report for 'its provision for the development of its staff'. The present audit team found evidence that the University continued to provide effective means for the support of staff in delivering its programmes. In particular, the team considered the contribution of SEDU to the sustenance and continuous improvement of the quality of educational provision across the University's campuses to be a feature of good practice.

276 The audit team found that arrangements for staff recruitment, selection, appointment and promotion were sound. It was not always clear whether students on remote campuses had access to the same level of learning support as those based on the University's main campus. Given that the University states that its primary aim for learning and teaching is 'to sustain and continuously to improve the high quality of educational provision across all its campuses', as it expands and diversifies it will wish to monitor the experience of students on remote campuses to confirm 'equity of experience'. The University considers its approach to the care of students and the provision of learning opportunities to be progressive and effective, and on the whole the audit team concurred with this view.

Outcomes of discipline audit trails

Biology

277 The scope of the DAT was the School of Biology and covered the following programmes:

- Biology (BSc Honours and BSc Ordinary)
- Zoology (BSc Honours and BSc Ordinary)
- Genetics (BSc Honours and BSc Ordinary)
- Human Genetics (BSc Honours and BSc Ordinary)
- Biological Photography and Imaging (MSc)
- Biological Imaging and Photography (PgDip).

278 From its study of students' assessed work and from its discussions with students and staff, the audit team found the standard of student achievement to be appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ. The programme specification set out appropriate educational aims and learning outcomes.

279 Students whom the audit team met were satisfied with the mechanisms for feedback and representation, confirming that they received information on action taken in response to matters that they raised. The team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for the named programmes of study.

English Studies

280 The scope of the DAT was the School of English Studies and covered the following programmes:

- BA Honours in English Studies
- BA Honours in English Studies and Theology
- BA Honours in Viking Studies
- BA Honours in English Studies and Latin
- BA Honours in Classical Civilisation and English Studies
- MA in Applied Linguistics by Web Based Distance Learning
- MA in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching by Web Based Distance Learning
- MA in Literary Linguistics by Web Based Distance Learning
- MA in Modern English Language by Web Based Distance Learning
- MA in Applied Linguistics
- MA in Literary Linguistics
- MA in Modern English Language
- MA in Victorian Studies

- MA in Medieval English
- MA in Viking and Anglo-Saxon Studies
- MA in English Studies
- MA in D.H. Lawrence and the Modern Age
- MA in English and American Studies
- MA in Dramaturgy and Performance Analysis.

281 From its study of students' assessed work and from its discussions with students and staff, the audit team found the standard of student achievement to be appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ. The programme specification set out appropriate educational aims and learning outcomes.

282 Students whom the audit team met were satisfied with the mechanisms for feedback and representation, confirming that they received information on action taken in response to matters that they raised. The team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for the named programmes of study.

Mathematical Sciences

283 The scope of the DAT was the School of Mathematical Sciences and covered the following programmes:

Single honours

- three-year BSc Mathematics
- four-year MMath Mathematics
- three-year BSc Mathematics with Engineering
- four-year MMath Mathematics with Engineering

The Mathematical Sciences element of the following Joint Honours programmes:

- three-year JH BSc Mathematics and Computer Science
- three-year JH BSc Mathematics and Economics
- three-year JH BSc Mathematics and Management Studies
- three-year JH BSc Mathematics and Philosophy
- three-year JH BEng Electronic Engineering and Mathematics
- four-year JH MEng Electronic Engineering and Mathematics

Taught postgraduate programmes

- one-year MSc Statistics to be introduced in October 2005
- 0.75-year PgDip Statistics.

284 From its study of students' assessed work and from its discussions with students and staff, the audit team found the standard of student achievement to be appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ. The programme specification set out appropriate educational aims and learning outcomes.

285 Students whom the audit team met were satisfied with the mechanisms for feedback and representation, confirming that they received information on action taken in response to matters that they raised. The team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for the named programmes of study.

Mechanical, Materials and Manufacturing Engineering

286 The scope of the DAT was the School of Mechanical, Materials and Manufacturing Engineering and covered the following programmes:

Single honours

- BSc Hons Biomedical Materials Science
- MEng Hons Integrated Engineering
- BEng Hons Mechanical Engineering
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering (Business)
- BEng Hons Integrated Mechanical Engineering
- MEng Hons Integrated Mechanical Engineering
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering (Automotive)
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering (Aerospace)
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering, Materials and Manufacture
- BEng Hons Product Design and Manufacture
- MEng Hons Product Design and Manufacture

and the Engineering element of the following programmes:

- BEng Hons Manufacturing Engineering and Management
- MEng Manufacturing Engineering and Management
- BEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with Mathematics
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with Mathematics
- BEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with French
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with French
- BEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with German

- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with German
- BEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with Spanish
- MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering with Spanish
- MEng Hons Manufacturing Engineering and Management with French
- BEng Hons Manufacturing Engineering and Management with Japanese
- BEng Hons Mechanical Design, Materials and Manufacture
- MEng Hons Mechanical Design, Materials and Manufacture

Taught postgraduate programmes

- MSc Human Factors
- MSc Manufacturing Engineering and Management
- MSc Manufacturing Systems
- MSc Surface Design and Engineering
- PgCert Applied Ergonomics (distance learning).

287 From its study of students' assessed work and from its discussions with students and staff, the audit team found the standard of student achievement to be appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ. The programme specification set out appropriate educational aims and learning outcomes.

288 Students whom the audit team met were satisfied with the mechanisms for feedback and representation, confirming that they received information on action taken in response to matters that they raised. The team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for the named programmes of study.

Pharmacy

289 The scope of the DAT was the School of Pharmacy and covered the following programmes:

- BSc Pharmaceutical Sciences
- Masters in Pharmacy (MPharm)
- MRes/MPhil/ PhD programme.

290 From its study of students' assessed work and from its discussions with students and staff, the audit team found the standard of student achievement to be appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ. The programme specification set out appropriate educational aims and learning outcomes.

291 Students whom the audit team met were satisfied with the mechanisms for feedback and

representation, confirming that they received information on action taken in response to matters that they raised. The team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for the named programmes of study.

Politics

292 The scope of the DAT was the School of Politics and covered the following programmes:

Undergraduate provision

- BA Hons Politics
- BA Hons European Politics

The politics element of the following programmes:

- BA Hons Politics and American Studies
- BA Hons Politics and American Studies (International Study)

Postgraduate provision

- L203 MA Political Science
- Political Theory (Research Track)
- MA Asia and Pacific Studies
- MA International Relations
- International Relations (Research Track)
- MA Comparative Politics (Research Track)
- MA Comparative Politics: Transitions and State Development
- MA Diplomacy
- MA Politics and Social Policy
- MA Politics and Contemporary History
- MA in International Security and Terrorism (to be offered from September 2005).

293 From its study of students' assessed work and from its discussions with students and staff, the audit team found the standard of student achievement to be appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ. The programme specification set out appropriate educational aims and learning outcomes.

294 Students whom the audit team met were satisfied with the mechanisms for feedback and representation, confirming that they received information on action taken in response to matters that they raised. The team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for the named programmes of study.

The use made by the institution of the Academic Infrastructure

295 The SED pointed to the elements of Academic Infrastructure as 'important points of reference' in the management of quality and standards. The University's approach to the *Code of practice* has been to incorporate its response to the precepts into its Quality Manual, so that staff could be confident that by complying with the Quality Manual they were implementing the *Code of practice* in accordance with University policy. Programme specifications are referenced to subject benchmark statements. As noted, external examiners are asked to confirm that the requirements of the FHEQ and benchmark statements are met.

296 The University has developed and introduced a qualifications framework related to and intended to support the implementation of the FHEQ. Plans for confirming alignment of current programmes with the University's qualifications framework will not be completed until 2010. The audit team therefore formed the view that the University might wish to consider whether this process could be accelerated so that the aim of the framework to provide reliable information to students, employers and others could be achieved more rapidly.

297 The University will complete its schedule for implementing the published programme specifications for all of its programmes of study in September 2005. Programme specifications for ordinary degrees and for sub-degree qualifications are not produced routinely but the audit team was informed that had been compiled in draft form. The University may wish to consider whether there would be merit in publishing these specifications so that students and employers were informed about the knowledge and competencies that they signified.

298 The audit team formed the view that, in general, the University had appraised its provision against the *Code of practice* and had adjusted its policy and procedures as necessary. The need for means for the University to approve all information produced by collaborative partners for publicity purposes has been noted. Overall, the team found that the University was engaging with all the elements of the academic infrastructure but that there was scope for some acceleration in securing full alignment in some areas.

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

299 The SED provided a clear and accurate account of the University's approach to management of standards and quality. In conjunction with the extensive supporting and supplementary material provided to the audit team, almost all of which is publicly available, a comprehensive account of the University's policies and procedures for managing and enhancing learning and teaching was available to the team. It was also evident that the University has a capacity for self-evaluation which it uses to keep these policies and procedures under review, and that it introduces improvements when it sees clear benefits to staff and students.

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

300 The University's intentions for enhancement are set out in the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The implementation of this strategy is overseen by the Educational Development Advisory Group, on behalf of the Teaching Committee. The SEDU plays an important operational role in delivering some aspects of the strategy. Funding for the strategy is being used to develop web-based learning resources which will provide further opportunities for the dissemination of the good practices identified by such processes as periodic quality audit. From discussions with members of the University, and from documents provided, the team considered that students have benefited from the steps that have been taken to enhance quality, and that further progress can be expected.

Reliability of information

301 The audit process included checking on the procedures for ensuring the accuracy and reliability of information published by the University. The audit team found that students were appreciative of the scope and reliability of information available to them. The quality and availability of student handbooks and module guides was generally high. The audit team considered that the University had made good progress in publishing the information required by HEFCE's documents 02/15, *Information on quality and standards in higher education*, and 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance*. The team concluded that that reliance could be placed in the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the

information the institution publishes about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards.

Features of good practice

302 The following features of good practice were noted:

- i the responsive approach to student representation which promotes active student involvement in University processes at all levels in the institution (paragraphs 29, 74, 77)
- ii the contribution of the SEDU to the sustenance and continuous improvement of the quality of educational provision across the University's campuses (paragraphs 99, 141)
- iii the comprehensive, accurate and accessible information provided to students including the Student Portal which allows seamless access to a variety of e-learning resources (paragraphs 102, 139, 166, 187, 204, 223, 240).

Recommendations for action by the University:

303 Recommendations for action that is advisable:

- i establish and maintain effective monitoring of assessment schemes for joint honours programmes, with particular reference to consistency in the regulations for borderline classifications and the coordination of the scheduling of examination boards where the results of joint honours students are considered (paragraphs 36, 63)
- ii in developing its policies and procedures for periodic review and audit, ensure the consistent application and implementation of systematic and uniform requirements for the inclusion of independent advisers external to the University in the membership of all panels (paragraphs 55, 57)
- iii ensure that formal agreements for the operation of collaborative arrangements preclude serial arrangements for provision leading to awards of the University, and also include a means for the University to approve all information produced by collaborative partners for publicity purposes (paragraphs 66, 122).

304 Recommendations for action that is desirable:

- i given the planned expansion of provision in overseas campuses, keep under review the continuing appropriateness of its policies and procedures for the management of the quality and standards of its awards offered through such arrangements (paragraphs 37, 38).

Appendix

The University of Nottingham's response to the audit report

The University of Nottingham welcomes the report's conclusion of 'broad confidence' in the management of the quality of its academic programmes and the standards of its awards. The University is committed to ensuring that the quality of its provision is of the highest possible standard and is therefore pleased to receive such an endorsement after undergoing a rigorous audit. The content of the report affirms our view that we have a talented and conscientious body of staff and students who share a common commitment to academic excellence. The University also welcomes the positive outcomes of the six discipline audit trails, which recognise the high standard of student achievement and the quality of learning opportunities.

We note that the audit team specifically identified the following areas of good practice:

- the responsive approach to student representation which promotes active student involvement in University processes at all levels in the institution;
- the contribution of the Staff and Educational Development Unit to the sustenance and continuous improvement of the quality of educational provision across the University's campuses;
- the comprehensive, accurate and accessible information provided to students including the Student Portal which allows seamless access to a variety of e-learning resources.

Good practice in these and the other areas highlighted in the report will continue to be worked upon as part of the University's commitment to continually enhancing the quality of the student experience.

The University, through its Teaching Committee, is scrutinising the report's recommendations. Appropriate action has already been taken on most points, and our follow-up programme will be completed in 2005/06.

The University would like to thank the audit team for the professional, thorough and courteous manner in which the audit was conducted. The audit was a welcome opportunity to examine and confirm the effectiveness of Nottingham's management of the quality of its academic programmes and the standards of its awards.

