



# **Outcomes from Institutional Audit: 2009-11**

## **Postgraduate research students**

### **Third series**

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### Preface

One of the objectives of Institutional Audit is to 'contribute, in conjunction with other mechanisms and agencies in higher education, to the promotion and enhancement of quality in teaching, learning and assessment'. To support this objective, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) publishes short working papers, each focused on a key topic addressed within the audit process. These papers, which are published under the general title *Outcomes from Institutional Audit*, are based on analysis of the individual audit reports (for full details of the methodology used, see Appendix C).

Two series of papers, covering audits that took place between 2003 and 2006, have already been published, together with two related series, *Outcomes from Collaborative Provision Audit* and *Outcomes from Institutional Review in Wales*. The present series will cover the cycle of audits taking place between 2007 and 2011. Some structural changes have been made to the papers for this series: in particular, rather than considering the audit process in isolation, they will place the findings from audit in the context of other evidence (for example from the National Student Survey) and key research findings where appropriate.

The papers seek to identify the main themes relating to the topic in question to be found in the audit reports, drawing in particular on the features of good practice and recommendations identified by audit teams. Both features of good practice and recommendations are cross-referenced to paragraphs in the technical annex of individual audit reports, so that interested readers may follow them up in more detail. A full list of features of good practice and recommendations relating to each topic is given in Appendices A and B.

It should be remembered that a feature of good practice is a process or practice that the audit team considers to make a particularly positive contribution to the institution's approach to the management of the security of academic standards and/or the quality of provision in the **context of the institution**. Thus the features of good practice mentioned in this paper should be considered in their proper institutional context, and each is perhaps best viewed as a stimulus to reflection and further development rather than as a model for emulation. Similarly, recommendations are made where audit teams identify specific matters where the institution should consider taking action; they rarely indicate major deficiencies in existing practice. *Outcomes* papers seek to highlight themes that emerge when recommendations across a number of Institutional Audit reports are considered as a whole.

*Outcomes* papers are written primarily for those policy makers and managers within the higher education community with immediate responsibility for and interests in quality assurance, although specific topics may be of interest to other groups of readers. While QAA retains copyright in the content of the *Outcomes* papers, they may be freely downloaded from QAA's website and cited with acknowledgement.

## Summary

This paper provides an overview of the features of postgraduate research provision discussed in the 59 Institutional Audit reports published between September 2009 and July 2011. It is clear from these reports that institutions have sought to align closely with the precepts of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes (2004)*.<sup>1</sup> In so doing they have generally succeeded in providing a high quality environment for postgraduate research students and in establishing appropriate and consistent academic standards.

In 2005-06, prior to the audits analysed in this report, a special review of postgraduate research degree programmes in institutions in England and Northern Ireland had been commissioned by the funding bodies and carried out as a desk-based exercise by QAA. It was clear that this activity had enabled institutions to review and enhance their postgraduate research provision. This was reflected in the current set of audit reports by the high level of consistency between institutions in terms of their policies and procedures and the quality of support offered to postgraduate research students.

The high degree of consistency in the arrangements for postgraduate research provision is of particular note, given the significant variations in its scale and nature across the sector, and the substantial growth in existing provision, and/or the introduction of new provision in some institutions. Student numbers ranged from nearly 3,000 in one institution to fewer than 10 in a number of others with differences also being apparent in the balance between part-time and full-time students, the focus of research activity within institutions and the number of overseas students. There was also considerable variation in the maturity of provision, with some institutions in the process of introducing research degrees for the first time, some with plans to gain their own research degree awarding powers and others with growth strategies for existing, well established provision in line with their wider research agendas. A growth in the provision of professional doctorates was also evident in some institutions.

This paper adopts the themes identified in the *Handbook for Institutional Audit: England and Northern Ireland (2006)* Annex C to report on the institutional arrangements for: providing an appropriate research environment; the selection, admission, induction and supervision of research students; the progression and review of research students; developing research and other skills; the provision of feedback by postgraduate research students; the assessment of research students; and processes for dealing with student complaints and appeals.

The areas of strength discussed in more detail in this report include the steps taken by institutions to provide high quality research environments and the positive role played in many by a Graduate or Doctoral School. The paper also considers the factors that have led to the effective arrangements for student supervision and support being highlighted in many of the audit reports. Another area which was widely commended in the audit reports, and which is discussed in this paper, relates to the arrangements for the development of research and generic skills by postgraduate research students. It is clear from the clustering of recommendations in the audit reports that there were two main areas for potential improvement in some institutions: the need to improve the institutional-level arrangements for the annual monitoring of postgraduate research provision including the more systematic use of data and benchmarks, and the need for more consistency in the training of postgraduate research students involved in teaching or assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time the audits were undertaken, the *Code of practice* was in operation as part of the Academic Infrastructure. From 2012-13, the Academic Infrastructure has been replaced by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Further information is available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/Pages/default.aspx)

### Context

1 This paper is based on a review of the outcomes of the reports of 59 Institutional Audits published between September 2009 and July 2011 (see Appendix D, page 33). A note on the methodology used to produce this and other papers in this third *Outcomes* series can be found in Appendix C (page 32).

2 The audit reports analysed in this paper result from the requirements of the Institutional Audit process described in the *Handbook for Institutional Audit: England and Northern Ireland* (2006).<sup>2</sup> Whereas the previous methodology had incorporated consideration of postgraduate research provision in the broader judgements of standards and quality, the audit process set out in the 2006 *Handbook* required auditors to 'comment specifically on the institution's arrangements for maintaining appropriate academic standards and quality of provision of postgraduate research awards' (paragraph 23). This was intended to provide 'a sharper focus on postgraduate research programmes' (page 2) and it was anticipated that audit teams would comment on:

'the use made of external examiners, internal and external review of research provision, research students as partners in quality management, the Academic Infrastructure and other reference points, management information including feedback, and other relevant topics' (paragraph 11)

The *Handbook* Annex C provided a suggested list of subheadings that might be used within reports. Although only approximately half of the reports adopted the subheadings explicitly, it was evident that audit teams had made good use of them as an aide memoire to ensure that they had reviewed the key features of postgraduate research provision. These themes have therefore been used as the framework for this report (paragraph 11).

3 A key focus of the Institutional Audit process was consideration of the extent to which institutions have aligned with relevant elements of the Academic Infrastructure. In the case of postgraduate research provision these were *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ),<sup>3</sup> that sets out the expectations for awards at levels 7 and 8, and the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* (2004).<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that Section 1 of the *Code of practice* has a somewhat different status than other sections in that it 'is written in a firmer style than some other sections, especially the precepts, to give institutions clear guidance on the funding councils' and the Agency's (QAA's) expectations in respect of the management, quality and academic standards of research programmes'.

4 In 2005-06, QAA had been commissioned by the funding bodies to undertake a special review of postgraduate research degree programmes in England and Northern Ireland.<sup>5</sup> This review, which was compulsory for all higher education institutions (HEIs) in receipt of funding for postgraduate research programmes, and optional for others, covered 114 institutions and took the form of a primarily desk-based exercise. It 'was intended as a means to gauge the extent to which the policies and procedures of HEIs are in alignment with' the revised QAA *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*

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<sup>2</sup> The Handbook was revised and republished in 2009. From 2011, Institutional Audit was replaced by Institutional Review for England and Wales. Further information is available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/Pages/default.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/The-framework-for-higher-education-qualifications-in-England-Wales-and-Northern-Ireland.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/The-framework-for-higher-education-qualifications-in-England-Wales-and-Northern-Ireland.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-section-1.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-section-1.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/OverviewrepENI.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/OverviewrepENI.pdf)

(2004) (paragraph 2).<sup>6</sup> This review had an impact on the outcomes of the audit reports being considered in this paper in two ways. Firstly, it caused institutions to place a particular focus on their alignment with the *Code of practice* in advance of these audits and in some cases gave them the opportunity to respond to any deficiencies that had been identified. Secondly, it provided audit teams with a detailed report against which to measure their progress.

5 Fourteen of the audit reports were for institutions that did not have their own research degree awarding powers. In these cases provision was validated and overseen by a partner institution with the necessary authority.<sup>7</sup> Of the remainder, 33 were independent institutions with their own research degree awarding powers, nine were constituent institutions of the University of London<sup>8</sup> and three had no postgraduate research provision.<sup>9</sup> The University of London audit report noted that its 'Colleges are responsible for all aspects of their research degree students' progress' and that the residual central responsibility for the administration of examinations would come to an end in 2010. There were a number of University of London postgraduate research students who remained the responsibility of the central School of Advanced Studies.<sup>10</sup> One of the institutions with validated postgraduate research awards had not yet enrolled any students<sup>11</sup> and two were seeing out the completion of existing students but had ceased recruitment of new students.<sup>12</sup>

6 The sector saw a significant growth in doctoral student numbers in the period prior to this series of audits with doctoral research student numbers rising from 16,112 to 20,866 (30 per cent) between 2002-03 and 2007-08, and doctoral taught student numbers rising from 607 to 820 (35 per cent) over the same period.<sup>13</sup> Research master's student numbers dropped by 24 per cent from 10,237 to 7,816 giving an overall increase in student numbers of 11 per cent.<sup>14</sup> The audit reports reveal that some institutions were in the process of introducing postgraduate research awards to their portfolios,<sup>15</sup> while others were relatively recent recipients of research degree awarding powers.<sup>16</sup> One audit report noted the claim made by an institution that it had a validation arrangement in place with another institution for postgraduate research awards. However, in the absence of a signed memorandum of agreement and on the basis that there was not full confidence that an appropriate learning environment would be in place, the audit team recommended it as advisable that the institution should both 'ensure the validation, accreditation or approval status of all programmes is clearly indicated in all information for intending students' and 'ensure that

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<sup>6</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/OverviewrepENI.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/OverviewrepENI.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Arts University College Bournemouth, paragraph 108; Ashridge, paragraph 135; Bishop Grosseteste College, paragraph 174; Buckinghamshire New University, paragraph 142; Conservatoire of Dance and Drama, paragraph 76; Guildhall School of Music & Drama, paragraph 61; Newman University College, paragraph 173; Norwich University College of the Arts, paragraph 120; Royal Northern College of Music, paragraph 82; St Mary's University College, paragraph 75; University College Plymouth St Mark and St John, paragraph 114; University of Cumbria, paragraph 138; Writtle College, paragraph 3; York St John University, paragraph 80

<sup>8</sup> Birkbeck College, London, paragraph 114; Coutauld Institute of Art, paragraph 102; Heythrop College, University of London, paragraph 136; Queen Mary, University of London, paragraph 1, Royal Holloway, University of London, paragraph 1; St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraph 40, University of London (School of Advanced Study), paragraph 65; Kings College London, paragraph 1, Institute of Education, paragraph 1

<sup>9</sup> College of Law, paragraph 108; University College Birmingham, paragraph 62; University of London International Programmes, paragraph 150

<sup>10</sup> University of London, paragraph 65

<sup>11</sup> Arts University College Bournemouth, paragraph 112

<sup>12</sup> Conservatoire of Dance and Drama, paragraph 76, University College Plymouth St Mark & St John, paragraph 114

<sup>13</sup> [www.hepi.ac.uk/files/45%20Postgraduate%20education%20full.pdf](http://www.hepi.ac.uk/files/45%20Postgraduate%20education%20full.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [www.hepi.ac.uk/files/45%20Postgraduate%20education%20full.pdf](http://www.hepi.ac.uk/files/45%20Postgraduate%20education%20full.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Arts University College Bournemouth, paragraph 109; Bishop Grosseteste University College, paragraph 174

<sup>16</sup> Canterbury Christ Church University, paragraph 163; Edge Hill University, paragraph 140; St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraph 176; University of Chester, paragraph 150; University of Worcester, paragraph 168

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students are not made a formal offer to a programme until the appropriate legal agreement, regulatory framework, resources and support are in place'.<sup>17</sup>

7 The significant variations in the size of the institutions audited, their differing missions and their stage of development meant that there was a very wide range of numbers of postgraduate research students enrolled. One institution had 2,806 postgraduate research students at the time of the audit with a further 311 writing up.<sup>18</sup> Four other institutions had between 2000 and 900 students.<sup>19</sup> In those cases for which student numbers were reported, eight institutions, most of which were small and specialist, had fewer than 40 postgraduate research students<sup>20</sup> with three institutions having seven or less.<sup>21</sup> Student numbers reported at larger non-specialist institutions ranged from 58<sup>22</sup> up to 686.<sup>23</sup> The audit reports also revealed significant differences in the balance between full-time and part-time student numbers with the latter constituting less than 20 per cent of the student body in some institutions<sup>24</sup> and 70 per cent or more in others.<sup>25</sup> The audit reports also highlighted the significant number of overseas students enrolled on postgraduate research awards at some institutions.<sup>26</sup> A few audit reports also noted that institutions were capitalising on the opportunity for their own staff to enrol for postgraduate research awards.<sup>27</sup>

8 The QAA publication *Doctoral degree characteristics (2011)*<sup>28</sup> and the 2010 UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) publication *One Step Beyond: Making the most of postgraduate education*<sup>29</sup> both provide useful summaries of the types of postgraduate research awards offered by institutions. The audit reports reflected this range of awards with most institutions offering the traditional Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD) normally achieved through progression from an initial registration on an MPhil award (34 reports). Fewer institutions were reported to be offering separate master's by research awards such as the MRes (10 reports) and two audit reports referred to institutions that were members of a New Route PhD Consortium offering an award taking four years full-time with a taught component.<sup>30</sup> Many institutions were also engaged in the delivery of professional doctorates that are offered in a variety of professional fields including engineering (EngD), nursing (DNursSci), veterinary medicine (VetMD), education (EdD), business administration (DBA) and clinical psychology (DClinPsy). These awards that often incorporate a taught element have seen substantial growth in recent years (24 reports). Some institutions also offered PhD awards that could be achieved through publication, which represents another developing area of activity (eight reports).

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<sup>17</sup> The Arts University College Bournemouth, paragraphs 111 and 116

<sup>18</sup> Imperial College London; paragraph 111

<sup>19</sup> Kings College London, paragraph 88; Queen Mary University, paragraph 106; Birkbeck College, London, paragraph 113; Royal Holloway, University of London, paragraph 94

<sup>20</sup> Heythrop College, University of London, paragraph 136; Harper Adams University College, paragraph 101; Writtle College, paragraph 133; Ashridge, paragraph 135; St Mary's University College, paragraph 75

<sup>21</sup> Newman University College, paragraph 173; Royal Northern College of Music, paragraph 84; Bishop Grosseteste University College, paragraph 174

<sup>22</sup> York St John University, paragraph 80

<sup>23</sup> Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraph 153

<sup>24</sup> Imperial College London, paragraph 111; Queen Mary University, paragraph 106

<sup>25</sup> Birmingham City University, paragraph 142; Edge Hill University, paragraph 141; University of Cumbria, paragraph 143

<sup>26</sup> Imperial College London, paragraph 111; Kings College London, paragraph 88; Kingston University, paragraph 128; Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraph 153; St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraph 154; University of Westminster, paragraph 122

<sup>27</sup> Edge Hill University, paragraph 141; University of Cumbria, paragraph 143; University of Derby, paragraph 140; University of Huddersfield, paragraph 168; York St John University, paragraph 80

<sup>28</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Doctoral\\_characteristics.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Doctoral_characteristics.aspx)

<sup>29</sup> [www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/corporate/docs/P/10-704-one-step-beyond-postgraduate-education.pdf](http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/corporate/docs/P/10-704-one-step-beyond-postgraduate-education.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Liverpool John Moores University, paragraph 144; University of Derby, paragraph 140



9 The audit reports contained 29 features of good practice (Appendix A) and 53 recommendations (Appendix B) that related to postgraduate research (PGR) provision. Of the former, approximately a quarter (seven), were features that were not specific to, but impinged upon, PGR provision. Less than 10 per cent of recommendations (five) related to issues which were not PGR-specific. While the features of good practice were spread across the themes identified below, there were two particular issues that accounted for a significant number of the recommendations. Fifteen related to the arrangements for training postgraduate research students who teach and/or assess and nine related to the broader monitoring of postgraduate research provision including the use of progression and completion data. These issues are discussed in more detail in paragraphs 34-35 and 23 respectively.

10 This paper is primarily based on Section 6; 'Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students' of each of the audit reports but also draws upon information from other relevant sections of the reports and from the report of the 2005-06 special review.<sup>31</sup> An *Outcomes* paper dedicated specifically to postgraduate research was not produced as part of either Series 1 or 2. However, in a number of instances, reference to postgraduate research in other *Outcomes* papers from those series has allowed some comparisons to be made.

## Themes

11 The themes selected for this paper are those identified in the *Handbook Annex C* as potential subheadings for the annex to the audit report:

- Institutional arrangements and the research environment.
- Selection, admission, induction and supervision of research students.
- Progression and review arrangements.
- Development of research and other skills.
- Feedback arrangements
- The assessment of research students
- Representations, complaints and appeals arrangements for research students.

## Institutional arrangements and the research environment

12 The audit reports demonstrate that many institutions (20) had plans to significantly develop their postgraduate research student provision. In some institutions this involved the establishment of new provision<sup>32</sup> with two institutions declaring their intention to apply for research degree awarding powers as part of this process.<sup>33</sup> The ambitious plans for growth in other institutions with more substantial existing provision were exemplified by institutions that expected to double the number of postgraduate research student registrations<sup>34</sup> or were expanding the provision of professional doctorates.<sup>35</sup> One institution declared its aspiration to become 'one of the 25 strongest research universities in the world by 2015' and saw the provision of 'world-class postgraduate research and training' as underpinning the achievement of this goal.<sup>36</sup> As was the case in this example, the development of

<sup>31</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/OverviewrepENI.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/OverviewrepENI.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Bishop Grosseteste University College, paragraphs 174 and 175; Royal Northern College of Music, paragraph 84; Norwich University College of the Arts, paragraph 123

<sup>33</sup> Newman University College, paragraph 173; York St John University, paragraph 82]

<sup>34</sup> University of Plymouth, paragraph 140; University of Teesside, paragraph 139; Queen Mary, University of London, paragraph 106

<sup>35</sup> Sheffield Hallam University, paragraph 109; University of Bedfordshire, paragraph 113

<sup>36</sup> University of Manchester, paragraph 25



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postgraduate research student activity was often an integral part of a wider institutional strategy for the development of research as a whole (14+ reports), with one institution stating that 'research students are vital to' its research effort.<sup>37</sup> The audit reports identified that a substantial number of institutions (15) were offering studentships to grow student numbers. For example, at one institution 375 fee waiver places had been created<sup>38</sup> and at another, quality related research funding had been used to support 40 new studentships per year.<sup>39</sup>

13 In one audit report the institution was commended for the 'thorough and well conceived plans for securing the research degree experience of the initial intake of students' that had benefitted from the 'efforts over a number of years to build the research profile of staff'.<sup>40</sup> In another audit report it was noted that the university concerned was 'conscious of the need to ensure that growth is commensurate with capacity' and that it was using its Risk Register effectively to keep 'a close overview of the match between the research environment, supervisory capacity and enrolled student numbers'.<sup>41</sup> Another institution had decided to focus on the 'capacity building amongst its staff following the loss of some well qualified supervisors' rather than to set a specific target for an increase in numbers.<sup>42</sup> Conversely, one audit team was concerned that, despite the efforts being made by one institution to increase its staff supervisory base, there continued to be an underlying challenge in developing the capacity to supervise the proposed growth in postgraduate research student numbers.<sup>43</sup>

14 There were no recommendations arising from the audit reports that found the broader research environment in institutions to be unsatisfactory. A few reports were direct in their praise of an institution's research environments, for example the provision of an 'exceptionally rich research environment',<sup>44</sup> the 'flourishing nature of the college's research environment',<sup>45</sup> the global acknowledgement of the School as 'a leading research centre',<sup>46</sup> 'the strong research environment across its three faculties'<sup>47</sup> and a 'reputation as a world leader in research'.<sup>48</sup> Some other reports reflected and broadly supported the institutions' own description of the type of research environment which they were endeavouring to provide. These included reference to the development of 'a dynamic research culture',<sup>49</sup> the intention to create and sustain 'a sense of intellectual and academic community amongst research students'<sup>50</sup> and the provision of 'a vibrant, research-rich environment'.<sup>51</sup> However, in one case the audit team considered that although progress had been made towards achieving its goal, the claim of one institution to have a 'vibrant and pervasive research culture' remained aspirational at the time of the audit.<sup>52</sup> A substantial number of audit reports also made a link between the success of institutions in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and the strength of the environment that they were able to offer (14 reports).

15 Approximately half of the audit reports referred to the varied roles of Graduate or Doctoral Schools including the management and coordination of postgraduate research

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<sup>37</sup> Imperial College London, paragraph 110

<sup>38</sup> University of Huddersfield, paragraph 168

<sup>39</sup> University of Plymouth, paragraph 141

<sup>40</sup> Bishop Grosseteste University College, paragraphs 175, 179 and 182

<sup>41</sup> University of Chester, paragraph 154

<sup>42</sup> University of Cumbria, paragraph 143

<sup>43</sup> University of Bedfordshire, paragraph 115

<sup>44</sup> Institute of Education, paragraph 143

<sup>45</sup> Kings College London, paragraph 88

<sup>46</sup> London School of Economics, paragraph 75

<sup>47</sup> University of Newcastle upon Tyne, paragraph 122

<sup>48</sup> Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 99

<sup>49</sup> London South Bank University, paragraph 137

<sup>50</sup> Birkbeck College, London, paragraph 119

<sup>51</sup> Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraph 156

<sup>52</sup> London Metropolitan University, paragraph 71

student activity, provision of a virtual and/or physical focus for a research community, central support and guidance to faculties and schools and oversight of provision. Although the differing roles of Graduate Schools were generally well understood and integrated with other parts of institutions, in two audit reports this transpired not to be the case leading to 'advisable' recommendations. In one example the audit team concluded that the institution needed to strengthen the relationship of its Graduate School with its faculties and Quality Support Unit to facilitate its oversight of the postgraduate student experience.<sup>53</sup> In the second case an institution was already aware of issues arising from the lack of a clear role for its Graduate School which was exacerbated by an 'uneasy' division of responsibility between its Research Committee and Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee. This led the audit team to conclude that it was advisable for the institution to 'clarify the lines of deliberative and executive responsibility for postgraduate research degree programmes, with particular reference to the function and remit for the Graduate School'.<sup>54</sup> The role played by Graduate Schools was commended as a feature of good practice in three audit reports: in one instance for its contribution to the development of college-wide policies and practices,<sup>55</sup> in a second for its effective and complementary working with academic schools to provide a common framework and sense of community for postgraduate research students,<sup>56</sup> and in a third for the support and enhancement of the student experience by access to the services of the Graduate School through five graduate centres spread across four UK campuses and a graduate centre in each of a number of international campuses.<sup>57</sup> In general the audit reports confirmed that Graduate Schools were playing a valuable role in many institutions.

16 It was evident from the audit reports that institutions were seeking to sustain and strengthen their research environments in a variety of ways. For instance the practice at one institution of carrying out Developmental Engagements with schools to enhance consistency was found to have had a positive impact on the postgraduate student experience and the quality of the research environment which was considered to be a feature of good practice.<sup>58</sup> Another university had completed a 'Research Review...to identify ways to strengthen the research environment to make it conducive to researchers at all stages of their careers to be motivated, creative and productive'.<sup>59</sup> In some audit reports it was clear that postgraduate research opportunities and developments were being focussed in particular areas of strength in order to provide a suitable research environment (10 reports). In one example this was being achieved by concentrating research activity within two departments<sup>60</sup> while in another it resulted in the majority of postgraduate research students being located in one faculty.<sup>61</sup> In addition to those examples where activity is focussed in particular academic divisions it is clear from the audit reports that many institutions had specific research groupings, some of which were identified as interdisciplinary; variously described as clusters, centres or, institutes, to which postgraduate research students were linked (26 reports). A few other audit reports referred to Doctoral Training Centres or Programmes as the main focus of activity.<sup>62</sup> In a few cases institutions highlighted their focus on applied research<sup>63</sup> with one institution having a key mission aim to 'create and transform knowledge to practical application'.<sup>64</sup> In these cases strong links with industry also made a significant contribution to the quality of the research environment.

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<sup>53</sup> University of Plymouth, paragraph 167

<sup>54</sup> Royal Holloway, University of London, paragraph 98

<sup>55</sup> Kings College London, paragraph 90

<sup>56</sup> University of Northumbria at Newcastle, paragraphs 187 and 188

<sup>57</sup> University of Nottingham, paragraph 150

<sup>58</sup> University of Westminster, paragraph 126

<sup>59</sup> University of Derby, paragraph 145

<sup>60</sup> Harper Adams University College, paragraph 101

<sup>61</sup> Edge Hill University, paragraph 141

<sup>62</sup> Oxford Brookes, paragraph, 167; Imperial College London, paragraph 116, ; Manchester, paragraph 101

<sup>63</sup> Ashridge, paragraph 136; Harper Adams University College, paragraph 102; Royal Northern College of Music, paragraph 45

<sup>64</sup> Cranfield University, paragraph 66

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17 Many audit reports (23 reports) identified the further efforts made by institutions to enhance the research environment through a variety of forums such as seminar series, colloquia and annual postgraduate research student conferences. These included examples of events that encouraged postgraduate research students to gain experience of presenting their own research, provided opportunities for networking and gave access to external speakers at institutional and/or school/faculty level. At one institution it was a formal requirement for research students to attend a weekly research forum<sup>65</sup> while at another a student-run Postgraduate Research Association (PGRA) received support from the Graduate School to provide a seminar series and one-day annual conference which was considered to be effective in 'nurturing a cross-disciplinary postgraduate research community'.<sup>66</sup> The Research Forum at one institution that had attracted external funding to bring together 'research students, research staff and eminent visiting scholars', was considered to be a feature of good practice that offered a 'focus and support for a range of research activities'.<sup>67</sup>

18 Where audit reports commented on the quality of resources available to postgraduate research students (30 plus reports) the focus was either on library resources, general infrastructure and/or access to study spaces and computers. There were comparatively few issues (six reports) and no recommendations related to the quality of resources compared to the many (19 reports) positive comments and three related features of good practice. The 'proactive and responsive approach of the library service to user needs' in one institution<sup>68</sup> and the 'provision of well managed and resourced specialist library services' at another<sup>69</sup> were considered to be features of good practice. Other reports also highlighted positive features of library provision including the critical role of library provision in providing a suitable research environment,<sup>70</sup> the provision of a library team to support research activities<sup>71</sup> and the dedicated postgraduate research support provided by the Information Learning Services.<sup>72</sup> In just a few reports (four reports), audit teams had encountered contradictory evidence regarding the quality of library resources, for example where the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) had scored provision poorly but where the students met by the audit team had confirmed its adequacy. These were not considered to have raised sufficient causes for concern to give rise to any recommendations. Other aspects of resourcing that featured positively in some reports included designated physical resources for postgraduate research students such as the 'Convivium' social space at one institution,<sup>73</sup> the dedicated Graduate Centres at another<sup>74</sup> and the purpose-built office accommodation for the majority of on-campus postgraduate research students at a third.<sup>75</sup> In another audit report 'the considerable investment in the last five years, in near-industrial scale facilities, new laboratories and dedicated facilities' led to the conclusion that the enhancement of student learning opportunities offered by access to a wide range of high-quality resources was a feature of good practice.<sup>76</sup> A few reports identified issues relating to the provision of appropriate work space and/or computers for some postgraduate research students.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Royal Northern College of Music, paragraphs 85 and 93

<sup>66</sup> Canterbury Christ Church University, paragraph 168

<sup>67</sup> Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 100

<sup>68</sup> Cranfield University, paragraphs 73,74 and 131

<sup>69</sup> Institute of Education, paragraphs 82 and 144

<sup>70</sup> Royal Holloway, University of London, paragraph 100

<sup>71</sup> University of Northumbria at Newcastle, paragraph 185

<sup>72</sup> University of Worcester, paragraph 176

<sup>73</sup> University of Huddersfield, paragraph 62

<sup>74</sup> Kingston University, paragraph 131

<sup>75</sup> University of Derby, paragraph 146

<sup>76</sup> Cranfield University, paragraphs 73 and 131

<sup>77</sup> Imperial College London, paragraph 78; Oxford Brookes University, paragraph 177; Royal Holloway, University of London, paragraphs 61 and 101; Writtle College, paragraph 154

19 Precept three of the *Code of practice, Section 1* states that institutions are expected to have in place 'a code or codes of practice applicable across the institution' for postgraduate research provision. Most (45 reports) audit reports made reference to such codes of practice and to associated regulations (36 reports) governing postgraduate research awards. A key mechanism for communicating this and other information to students was through the postgraduate research student handbooks referred to in most reports (34 reports). In three cases these were highlighted as features of good practice.<sup>78</sup> In the first of these, the audit team noted that the departmental research handbooks were 'intended to support students from registration through to graduation' and that they were 'informative, comprehensive and accessible.' In the second, the institution's Code of Practice, which was itself considered to be particularly valuable, was complemented by effective student handbooks. In the third, the quality of a handbook containing principles and regulations, which was accompanied by a Research Governance Handbook, both of which contributed to a wider feature of good practice concerning the 'depth, clarity, comprehensiveness and currency of the information' provided by the University to its staff and students. Conversely there was just one example where an audit report concluded that it would be advisable for an institution to improve its student handbooks on the grounds that those viewed by the team had not demonstrated 'effective institutional oversight of the information contained therein' and that they were 'variable in quality, consistency, accuracy, implementation of agreed policy and consonance with university regulations'.<sup>79</sup>

20 It is interesting to note, given the current level of activity in relation to research ethics (see paragraph 45), that ethical considerations and/or research misconduct were mentioned in many (23 reports) of the audit reports. This included reference to committees responsible for giving ethical approval for postgraduate research projects, ethical frameworks and reference to these issues in handbooks. At one institution the part played by the Research Governance Handbook in setting out clearly the principles, processes and standards that control the conduct of research and matters of ethical concern contributed to a wider feature of good practice that commended the quality of information provided by the university concerned.<sup>80</sup> However, at one institution the audit team concluded that the lack of a clear ethics policy 'could put PGR students at risk' and advised that 'the University formalise its ethical approval of research projects and the appropriate reporting of such approvals'.<sup>81</sup> No other audit reports raised issues of concern in this area.

21 The audit reports described a wide range of committees and frameworks for the management and monitoring of postgraduate research students which reflected the differences in scale and complexity of the provision and the institutions concerned. In some cases research degree issues were the business of specific research degree sub-committees that reported to higher level committees with a remit for all aspects of research while in others research degree issues were dealt with as an integral part of a single overarching committee. Similarly in some institutions' faculties/schools had their own research degree committees that reported to institutional-level committees while in others business was dealt with directly by a central committee. In one instance an audit team noted that the effectiveness of an institution's University Research Degree Committee would benefit from more consistent attendance by representatives of Faculty Research Degree Committees.<sup>82</sup> At another institution the audit team reported inconsistencies between the formal responsibilities and practical activities of two committees leading to the recommendation that it would be desirable for 'the University (to) ensure that the terms of reference of the Research and Development Committee and the Research Degrees

<sup>78</sup> Imperial College London, paragraph 123; Institute of Education, paragraph 140; University of Chester, paragraph 153

<sup>79</sup> Oxford Brookes University, paragraph 176

<sup>80</sup> University of Chester, paragraph 153

<sup>81</sup> University of Huddersfield, paragraph 184

<sup>82</sup> Birmingham City University, paragraph 141

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Committee accurately reflect their activities and relationship'.<sup>83</sup> Otherwise the audit reports confirmed that the variety of committee structures in place were fit for purpose.

22 Most audit teams reported in detail on the effectiveness of institutions' arrangements for monitoring postgraduate research provision. Although two features of good practice<sup>84</sup> emerged and some other institutions were commended for their activities in this area these were outweighed by nine related recommendations<sup>85</sup> and a few other issues of lesser importance. In one audit report the biennial review by an institution's Research Degrees Committee of each faculty Research Graduate School was found to be 'evidence-based, reflective and generate clear action points' and 'analysed data on a range of performance indicators'. The manner, in this instance, in which the administration of postgraduate research provision located in faculties was monitored by the central RDC was 'thoughtful and productive' and a feature of good practice.<sup>86</sup> In another example of good practice the 'consistent and systematic oversight of the research student experience' was carried out by a Board of Studies for Research Degrees that did 'not delegate authority for any aspects of research student oversight' and provided Senate with an annual summary report of research degree submissions and research student progress.<sup>87</sup> Examples where institutions were commended for their oversight of postgraduate research provision were characterised by the comprehensive, thorough and reflective nature of their annual review processes<sup>88</sup> and the effective analysis of relevant data and use of benchmarks.<sup>89</sup>

23 A number of recommendations concerning the annual monitoring of postgraduate research provision identified relatively broad issues. In one case the audit team acknowledged that actions were taken in the case of the progress of individual students but concluded that the Academic Standards and Quality Committee did not have oversight 'either collectively (in respect, for example, of admissions and completion data) or systematically'.<sup>90</sup> In another example an audit team could find 'little evidence of routine monitoring of overall performance, related, for example, to completion rates, the take-up of training by students, appeals and complaints, recruitment profiles or employment progression'.<sup>91</sup> One audit report also noted that annual monitoring was carried out at school level but that there was no evidence of discussion of potential issues arising from data beyond that level.<sup>92</sup> Some other recommendations were more specific and focussed on either the lack of use by institutions of internal and external benchmarks,<sup>93</sup> and/or of progression and completion data.<sup>94</sup> One audit report provided evidence of a thorough review of submission, completion and attrition rates that had given rise to concerns over supervision. In this case the audit team considered it desirable for the institution to 'continue to address issues relating to the completion rates of postgraduate research students'.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> London Metropolitan University, paragraph 9

<sup>84</sup> University of Ulster, paragraph 164; University of Bolton, paragraph 226

<sup>85</sup> Birmingham City University, paragraph 154; Canterbury Christ Church University, paragraphs 21, 29, 39, 42-43, 51, 76, 151 and 177; Cranfield University, paragraph 122; University of Cumbria, paragraphs 141, 155; University of East London, paragraph 30, 94-95; University of Gloucestershire, paragraph 142-143; University of London, paragraphs 19, 28, 32, 45, 65, 68; University of Nottingham, paragraph 34, 131; University of Plymouth, paragraphs 158, 167

<sup>86</sup> University of Ulster, paragraph 164

<sup>87</sup> University of Bolton, paragraphs 202, 226

<sup>88</sup> Buckinghamshire New University, paragraph 166; University of Derby, paragraph 141; Heythrop College, University of London, paragraph 139

<sup>89</sup> Oxford Brookes University, paragraph 174; Staffordshire University, paragraph 161; Harper Adams University College, paragraph 105; London School of Economics, paragraph 76

<sup>90</sup> University of London, paragraph 68

<sup>91</sup> Cranfield University, paragraph 122

<sup>92</sup> University of Nottingham, paragraph 131

<sup>93</sup> Birmingham City University, paragraph 154; University of Cumbria, paragraph 141; University of Gloucestershire, paragraph 143

<sup>94</sup> University of East London, paragraph 95; University of Plymouth, paragraph 167

<sup>95</sup> St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraphs 162, 164-165

## Selection, admission, induction and supervision of research students

24 The audit reports show that one model adopted by some institutions for the process of postgraduate research student admissions was for applications to be received and processed centrally and for admissions decisions to be made at school/faculty level with subsequent approval and/or monitoring by a central or school/faculty committee. Although there were many variations on this model in the way in which these processes were managed in different institutions, the audit reports confirm that they were generally robust and fit for purpose. In one institution where the responsibility for admissions was in the process of being delegated from the Graduate School to the faculties, the 'clear, comprehensive and accessible policy and set of procedures in place for the selection, admission and induction of students' was identified as part of a feature of good practice.<sup>96</sup> However, in another institution the audit team was concerned that recommendations concerning admissions being returned to the Graduate School from individual schools were not always complete or accurate and were in need of more careful monitoring at school level.<sup>97</sup>

25 Many audit reports confirmed that two or sometimes more staff were involved in interviewing postgraduate research applicants, with telephone/remote interviews being an option in some cases. There were three instances where institutions had been recommended, as an outcome of the earlier QAA review of postgraduate research degree programmes in England and Northern Ireland, to consider the more systematic use of interviews. In two cases the recommendation had been fully addressed,<sup>98</sup> albeit after some delay in one.<sup>99</sup> However, in the third, although the audit team found no evidence that poorly qualified or prepared students were being registered, they did encourage the institution to keep the matter under review to 'create parity for all applicants and take advantage of new technologies'.<sup>100</sup> Some audit reports made explicit reference to the training provided to those staff involved in the interview process. One report noted with concern that in one institution most academic staff involved in the admission of research students had not received any specific formal training for this role. In this case, the production of new guidelines was seen to be a timely development and the institution was encouraged to implement them without further delay.<sup>101</sup> Two other audit teams recommended institutions to review the guidance and training being provided to staff involved in the admission of students.<sup>102</sup> One audit report provided details of an enhanced, two-stage process for selection and admission which incorporated a training needs analysis prior to offer and which contributed to a wider feature of good practice concerning the 'systematic programme for admission, induction and support of postgraduate research students'.<sup>103</sup>

26 Most (47) audit reports described the arrangements for the induction of postgraduate research students at institutional and/or school/faculty level. The types of induction activity ranged from central events delivered at specific times of the year through to individual induction programmes. For example one institution offered a generic induction programme twice-yearly followed by a compulsory programme in each year of study,<sup>104</sup> another provided bespoke induction courses for full-time, part-time and international

<sup>96</sup> University of Chester, paragraph 162

<sup>97</sup> University of East London, paragraph 87

<sup>98</sup> Newman University College, paragraph 177

<sup>99</sup> University of Manchester, paragraph 103

<sup>100</sup> Institute of Education, paragraph 146

<sup>101</sup> Royal Holloway, University of London, paragraph 102

<sup>102</sup> University of London, paragraph 65; York St John University, paragraph 85

<sup>103</sup> University of Teesside, paragraphs 143, 144

<sup>104</sup> Kingston University, paragraph 135

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students<sup>105</sup> and in a third primary supervisors took responsibility for induction.<sup>106</sup> Despite the variation in the arrangements made it was notable that while in some cases the audit reports emphasised the positive nature of the students' experience (10 reports), only a few reports identified any deficiencies (four reports). Some audit reports identified the supporting materials made available to students as part of their induction including handbooks, a 'Learning to Research Booklet' written by staff and students<sup>107</sup> and information accessed through VLEs and websites. At one institution an audit team supported a commendation from an earlier QAA review regarding the comprehensive nature of the information provided at induction and the way in which it enabled students to understand what was expected of them in terms of their programme of study.<sup>108</sup> The process in another institution of supervisors and their students signing an annually updated working agreement that included the student's training requirements, was specifically picked out as part of a wider feature of good practice concerning the high quality of student support.<sup>109</sup> Potential delays in access to the induction programmes of an institution and its validating university led an audit team to conclude that the process was less effective than it might be and to advise the institution to ensure that 'induction for all new postgraduate research students...is delivered in a timely manner'.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, another institution was advised by an audit team to address issues relating to raising awareness amongst new and recently registered international students of the availability of English language support.<sup>111</sup>

27 The *Code of practice* recognises that the provision of high quality supervision is fundamental to the success of postgraduate research students. The audit reports (46 reports) described the training provided by institutions for new and inexperienced supervisors, which was confirmed in most cases to be mandatory (33 reports). Such arrangements included one institution where induction and development of new supervisors included 'a seminar series covering quality assurance procedures, the supervisors' role and relationship with research students, and preparation and examination of students',<sup>112</sup> while the staff in another commented on the 'quality of training provided and its focus on the practice of supervision rather than regulations and procedures'.<sup>113</sup> Three institutions had responded to recommendations from previous QAA reviews by enhancing the training provided for supervisors.<sup>114</sup> Many reports also identified opportunities for regular updating (18 reports) including forums, away days and refresher events. In a few institutions staff were required to update their training after a set number of years (five reports). In one instance where attendance every two years at an updating workshop was already mandatory a 'supervisor quality monitoring scheme' was due to be introduced. It was hoped that this would address the issues raised by the audit team relating to poor postgraduate research student completion rates which the institution had attributed to the lack of understanding, by supervisors, of the issues involved.<sup>115</sup> Some audit reports also referred to a range of supporting materials for supervisors such as guidelines, manuals and handbooks (11 reports). A university-wide HEFCE-funded project was identified as having expanded 'the range of support for new supervisors, including tailored sessions delivered by experts in schools and centrally, and a web-based resource for skills development, good practice and guidance'.<sup>116</sup> In contrast at another institution 'the audit team heard about a degree of

<sup>105</sup> Kings College London, paragraph 92

<sup>106</sup> Guildhall School of Music & Drama, paragraph 63

<sup>107</sup> Imperial College London, paragraph 121

<sup>108</sup> Institute of Education, paragraphs 147, 148

<sup>109</sup> Buckinghamshire New University, paragraphs 157, 158

<sup>110</sup> Writtle College, paragraph 135

<sup>111</sup> University of London, paragraphs 49, 66

<sup>112</sup> University of Bolton, paragraph 212

<sup>113</sup> Birkbeck College London, paragraph 126

<sup>114</sup> Canterbury Christ Church University, paragraph 164; Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 109; Heythrop College, University of London, paragraph 147

<sup>115</sup> St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraphs 164, 165, 170

<sup>116</sup> University of Nottingham, paragraph 142



confusion around the training and experience required of new supervisors' and considered it desirable that requirements for research supervisor training be clarified.<sup>117</sup>

28 The supervisory teams established by most institutions were normally two or three strong with one of the team being designated the primary supervisor or equivalent. In some cases provision was also made for the membership of the team to be supplemented by additional advisors or external supervisors with specific expertise. In a few cases a tutor was also identified to provide more general pastoral support.<sup>118</sup> Many audit reports identify the criteria that are applied for the appointment of supervisory teams with the expectation that at least one member of the team will have previously been involved in successfully supervising a student to completion (26 reports). In three institutions there was a higher expectation of three successful supervisions amongst the team.<sup>119</sup> Audit teams concluded that the arrangements at three institutions were not fully aligned with the precepts of the *Code of practice* and recommended that they review their arrangements to ensure that they were securing the advantages of a team approach to supervision. In all three cases audit teams noted that in some cases research students were being supervised by an individual supervisor, a practice inconsistent with the guidance in the *Code of practice*.<sup>120</sup> Many audit reports (20+) confirm that one method used by institutions to manage the effectiveness of supervision was the stipulation of a maximum supervisory load for individual members of staff. Most frequently this was six (13 reports) full-time research students or FTEs although this figure was as high as ten in some institutions. One report noted that an institution had responded to a previous QAA review by introducing a 'normal maximum of six full-time equivalent students'.<sup>121</sup> However, in two instances where institutions did not limit the number of students a supervisor might be expected to manage, the audit team considered it desirable for guidance to be introduced and levels to be monitored.<sup>122</sup>

29 There was an indication in many audit reports (~21 reports) of the level of support that a student might expect from their supervisor. This was typically couched in terms of the number of hours per week, fortnight, month or year of supervision that the student might expect, although it was not always clear whether this was with an individual supervisor or the supervisory team. At one end of the spectrum an institution stipulated 'a minimum of one hour per week on average for consultation'. In this case, although the audit team did not see any evidence that students were being disadvantaged, they did express concerns over the potential workload involved for supervisors and encouraged the institution to monitor supervisor workloads as part of its normal monitoring processes.<sup>123</sup> At the other end of the spectrum an institution specified a minimum of one formal supervisory meeting every six months at which the student's progress should be recorded. However, the audit team found that in practice students met with their principal supervisors each month and with their supervisory team every two months.<sup>124</sup> Although there was much variation in the guidelines on the minimum expectations for supervisory support and the way in which it was reported there was no evidence to suggest that there were any significant concerns with the level or quality of support on offer. Indeed, in one institution where the audit team found the arrangements for research degree provision to be 'rigorous and appropriate' this contributed to a broader feature of good practice related to student support as whole.<sup>125</sup> However, one

<sup>117</sup> University of Ulster, paragraph 167

<sup>118</sup> Heythrop College, University of London, paragraph 146; University of Cumbria, paragraph 146; St Mary's; University of London, paragraph 77; University of Manchester, paragraph 106

<sup>119</sup> Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraph 158; Royal Northern College of Music, paragraph 90; University of Worcester, paragraph 179

<sup>120</sup> Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 108; Institute of Education, paragraph 150; University of Manchester, paragraph 106

<sup>121</sup> University of Newcastle upon Tyne, paragraph 124

<sup>122</sup> Birmingham City University, paragraph 150; Liverpool John Moores University, paragraph 151

<sup>123</sup> Imperial College London, paragraph 126

<sup>124</sup> University of Northumbria at Newcastle, paragraph 192

<sup>125</sup> Buckinghamshire New University, paragraphs 160-163

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specific issue arose at an institution with a significant number of research students with joint supervision arrangements, spread across a number of institutions, some overseas. In this case, although the audit team were told of the arrangements in place for supervision of these students, there were no written guidelines that served to formalise their minimum entitlements to support. Consequently the audit team considered it desirable for 'the institution to develop guidance for staff in their support and progress-monitoring of research students studying off-campus, drawing on existing good practice'.<sup>126</sup>

### Progression and review arrangements

30 Those postgraduate research students ultimately aspiring to a research doctorate were normally registered on an MPhil in the first instance and had to subsequently satisfy the requirements of a formal progression process to PhD. The timing of this transfer was typically at about 12 months but could be as early as nine months in some institutions<sup>127</sup> and up to 18 months in others.<sup>128</sup> The requirements for progression included written reports, evidence of skills development and oral examinations, in some cases with independent assessors. In one institution the Transfer Review Panel consisted of three active researchers, of whom one was the supervisor, one was external to the university and one was an independent internal member with experience of supervision to PhD.<sup>129</sup> There were also examples of institutions that required a period of enrolment of between three and 12 months, to ensure that students were fully prepared prior to registration.<sup>130</sup> Direct registration to PhD was permitted in a small number of institutions and was restricted to applicants with a Masters degree with a research element in three cases<sup>131</sup> or involved a probationary registration in two others.<sup>132</sup> Most audit reports described the arrangements institutions had in place for the annual monitoring of individual student progress (32 reports).

31 The arrangements for progression and review were considered to be features of good practice in three audit reports. In one institution the progress of students was regularly reviewed by a small panel, independent of the supervisor. This review group considered written progress reports from the supervisor and student, whom they might also meet. The group's report on the student's progress, the completion of which is monitored by an Associate Dean, made recommendations for remedial action where necessary. Students met by the audit team welcomed the regular review meetings and confirmed that the documentation provided was helpful.<sup>133</sup> Elsewhere the effectiveness of a 'traffic light' system consisting of 'electronic student milestone reports' for monitoring the progress of students was recognised by the audit team.<sup>134</sup> In a third institution, the development and implementation of an online system for supporting research students called eProg, which had initially focussed on student progress and monitoring, was considered to have achieved considerable success.<sup>135</sup> Conversely the absence in one case of any formal reviews of student progress other than that involved in the upgrade of registration from MPhil to PhD led the audit team to conclude that it would be advisable for the institution to 'establish clearly defined mechanisms for progress reviews of postgraduate research students in

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<sup>126</sup> Queen Mary University, University of London, paragraph 105

<sup>127</sup> Cranfield University, paragraph 126; Imperial College London, paragraph 129

<sup>128</sup> Oxford Brookes University, paragraph 175; University of Derby, paragraph 147; University of Plymouth, paragraph 152

<sup>129</sup> Edge Hill University, paragraph 148

<sup>130</sup> London South Bank University, paragraph 142; Oxford Brookes University, paragraph 170; University of West London, paragraph 82

<sup>131</sup> Liverpool John Moores University, paragraph 147; Staffordshire University, paragraph 155; Teesside University, paragraph 142

<sup>132</sup> University of Cumbria, paragraph 149; York St John University, paragraph 84

<sup>133</sup> Cranfield University, paragraph 126

<sup>134</sup> Liverpool John Moores University, paragraph 149

<sup>135</sup> University of Manchester, paragraph 109

alignment with (the *Code of practice*)'.<sup>136</sup> In another institution the audit team was concerned that not all progress reports had not been received in a timely way by the relevant committee.<sup>137</sup>

## Development of research and other skills

32 There had been significant developments in relation to the skills development of research students prior to the period over which these audits were conducted. It is clear that both the introduction of the Research Councils UK Joint Skills Statement in 2001<sup>138</sup> and the publication of the 'Roberts' Report', *SET for Success* in 2002<sup>139</sup> were strong influences on the actions taken by higher education institutions. The former set out the skills that doctoral research students funded by the research councils would be expected to develop during their research training, while the latter recommended 'the provision of at least two weeks' dedicated training a year, principally in transferable skills' for postgraduate researchers, and resulted in additional government funding for that purpose. The arrangements in place for the development of generic and transferable research skills described in the audit reports confirm that in general these are well established and effective and that there were few areas of concern. A substantial number of audit reports (26 reports) indicate that institutions employ some form of Training Needs Analysis or skills audit to plan the training needs of individual research students. The timing of these varies, with some being carried out prior to registration and others being completed as part of induction. In many cases the training itself is organised and delivered centrally by for instance the Graduate School or the institution's Teaching and Learning Centre or equivalent. In some cases training consisted of a programme of workshops and short courses while in others it consisted of credit rated modules that could contribute to a Postgraduate Certificate award for example in Research Practice (nine reports). Some audit reports noted (~15 reports) that particular elements of training were compulsory with two examples where their completion was an expectation prior to transfer on to a PhD.<sup>140</sup>

33 Two audit reports carried recommendations in relation to the arrangements for research skills development. The lack of clarity in one institution as to whether a Postgraduate Certificate in Skills for Researchers was compulsory led an audit team to consider it advisable that procedures relating to research student training be revised 'clarifying the means of delivery and the expectations placed on students, in particular making it explicit which aspects of the training are mandatory'.<sup>141</sup> Another institution, in response to a recommendation from an earlier QAA review 'to introduce a more formal and compulsory programme for the development of research skills amongst the postgraduate research community', had developed a Postgraduate Certificate in Pre-doctoral Studies. However, although this was envisaged to be a prerequisite to registration on a research degree programme, pass rates had been low and feedback from staff and students had generally been negative. Consequently the course had undergone an early revalidation to ensure that it was more attractive and tailored to individual needs. Under these circumstances the audit team had determined that it would be desirable for the institution concerned to 'complete its revision of its training programmes for postgraduate research students and their supervisors'.<sup>142</sup>

34 MPhil/DMus students in one institution were provided with research skills training consisting of three seminar-based modules in each of their three years of study that

<sup>136</sup> University of Gloucestershire, paragraph 152

<sup>137</sup> Coutauld Institute of Art, paragraph 110

<sup>138</sup> [www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/researchcareers/jsstrainingrequirements.pdf](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/researchcareers/jsstrainingrequirements.pdf)

<sup>139</sup> [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/set\\_for\\_success.htm](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/set_for_success.htm)

<sup>140</sup> Imperial College London, paragraph 124; University of Cumbria, paragraph 150

<sup>141</sup> Harper Adams University College, paragraphs 113, 115

<sup>142</sup> Edge Hill University, paragraphs 149-153

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developed skills relevant and appropriate to each year. This 'carefully-planned and incremental' approach to training received 'extremely positive' feedback from students. The audit report stated that it 'not only reflects but considerably transcends the requirements of the Research Councils' joint statement on skills training' and was a feature of good practice.<sup>143</sup> In another institution students were required to take the university-wide Postgraduate Certificate in Research Skills which also incorporated, facilitated and formalised personal development planning. This training was considered to be well designed and delivered and its accreditation through the Certificate was also considered to be a feature of good practice.<sup>144</sup> The audit reports also highlighted other positive features of research skills training such as the breadth of opportunities made available through the MPhil/PhD Research Training Programme in one institution<sup>145</sup> and the role of a Skills Coordinators Group in sharing good practice and stimulating developments in another.<sup>146</sup> In a few cases audit reports noted that training was supported by online materials (six reports) which were identified in two institutions to be of particular value to part-time and overseas students.<sup>147</sup>

35 In addition to their more specific comments on research skills development most (~32 reports) audit reports refer to broader personal development planning (PDP) including explicit reference in a few cases to employability and career development. The range of ways in which one institution was 'developing the employability of all of its students' coupled with 'high-quality, well-directed' careers support was recognised in one audit report to be a feature of good practice.<sup>148</sup> Innovative practice in another institution where the well-established, comprehensive training and development opportunities were commended as a feature of good practice, involved a pilot project developing a 'postgraduate passport designed to enable students to demonstrate to employers the skills and qualities that they have developed that would be of relevance in the workplace'.<sup>149</sup> However, in one example, provision of personal development planning appeared to be less well developed than that of research skills development and the audit team recommended that the institution 'develop a purposeful approach to Personal Development Planning for all students'.<sup>150</sup> Elsewhere, students confirmed in one institution that they had received documentation relating to PDP but that they regarded it as an optional activity which was not valued highly<sup>151</sup> and in a second that they had not all taken full advantage of the PDP provision.<sup>152</sup> The most commonly reported method of recording skills development and PDP was through the use of a portfolio or skills log (13 reports). The requirement for students to complete a Research Development Portfolio as a form of PDP and a focus for reflection on their progress and development needs, alongside access to a diverse range of training opportunities was identified in one institution as a feature of good practice.<sup>153</sup>

36 Postgraduate research student involvement in teaching activities provided valuable opportunities for skills development in many institutions (47 reports). Where they existed, the extent of such opportunities varied considerably from institutions where few students participated<sup>154</sup> through to one case where approximately 90 per cent were involved.<sup>155</sup> In one institution the 'valuable training opportunities for students planning an academic career'

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<sup>143</sup> Guildhall School of Music & Drama, paragraph 64

<sup>144</sup> London South Bank University, paragraph 145

<sup>145</sup> Institute of Education, paragraph 158

<sup>146</sup> University of Manchester, paragraph 110

<sup>147</sup> Sheffield Hallam University, paragraph 125; University of Bolton, paragraph 218

<sup>148</sup> University of Newcastle upon Tyne, paragraph 130

<sup>149</sup> Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraph 163

<sup>150</sup> The Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 116

<sup>151</sup> University of Bedfordshire, paragraph 118

<sup>152</sup> University of Huddersfield, paragraph 180

<sup>153</sup> Norwich University College of the Arts, paragraph 131

<sup>154</sup> St Mary's University College, paragraph 79; University of Bolton, paragraph 217

<sup>155</sup> London School of Economics, paragraph 80

offered by the role of teaching assistant and the 'structured approach to their continuous professional development' was considered to be a feature of good practice.<sup>156</sup> However, the students at another institution 'expressed concern to the audit team over the lack of opportunities for developing teaching skills' an issue that the university had itself already recognised.<sup>157</sup> Audit reports confirmed that a maximum of six hours of teaching per week was the expectation for postgraduate research students. Most of the audit reports identified arrangements for the preparation of students to take on a teaching role. In many cases such training was mandatory and consisted of short courses and workshops. The training in a few institutions (seven reports) consisted of modules from Postgraduate Certificates in for example Academic Practice. In one institution an audit team were informed by the students that they met that the associate lecturer workshop programme and mentor support provided by staff was excellent.<sup>158</sup> A few other reports also emphasised the valuable role played by mentors in supporting postgraduate research students with their teaching (five reports).

37 Although many of the audit reports (22 reports) confirmed the suitability of the training for postgraduate research students involved in teaching, the occurrence of 15 related recommendations indicated that this was an area that needed attention in many institutions.<sup>159</sup> In all of these cases some form of training was in existence. However, concern existed where inexperienced postgraduate research students were engaged in teaching and/or assessment and had not been trained. This was the case where the training on offer was not mandatory<sup>160</sup> where its status was unclear<sup>161</sup> or where, although it was mandatory, its uptake was inconsistent and there was no robust mechanism for monitoring participation (nine reports). More specifically in one institution a more generic module in the Researcher Development Programme was not considered by the audit team to be sufficiently focussed to prepare students to teach.<sup>162</sup> In another instance it was considered inappropriate that training was only compulsory for those students teaching more than 50 hours a year.<sup>163</sup> The requirement for students to attend a postgraduate certificate module that had not been accessible to some students until their second year had meant that in one institution some Graduate Teaching Assistants had not received any training or induction prior to teaching.<sup>164</sup>

## Feedback arrangements

38 Most of the audit reports (40 reports) identified that there was postgraduate research student representation on key research committees at institutional and/or school/faculty level. At one institution students valued the opportunity to feed back through the programme board of studies and the effective actions that ensued. This contributed to a broader feature of good practice which highlighted a 'feedback-hungry culture and responsiveness to matters raised by students'.<sup>165</sup> Other examples where representation was considered particularly effective highlighted the inclusion of student matters as a standing

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<sup>156</sup> Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 115

<sup>157</sup> University of Gloucestershire, paragraph 155

<sup>158</sup> Sheffield Hallam University, paragraph 126

<sup>159</sup> University of Bedfordshire, paragraph 120; Birkbeck College, London, paragraph 84; Canterbury Christ Church University, paragraphs 10,181; University of Chester, paragraph 175; University of Derby, paragraph 160; University of East London, paragraphs 54, 91; University of Huddersfield, paragraph 185; Liverpool John Moores University, paragraph 155; University of Teesside, paragraph 153; University of Westminster, paragraph 132; Oxford Brookes University, paragraphs 111, 173; Queen Mary, University of London, paragraph 87; Writtle College, paragraph 153; York St John University, paragraph 85

<sup>160</sup> University of Bedfordshire, paragraph 120; University of Teesside, paragraph 153; York St John University, paragraph 85

<sup>161</sup> Buckinghamshire New University, paragraph 172; University of Huddersfield, paragraph 185

<sup>162</sup> Canterbury Christ Church University, paragraph 181

<sup>163</sup> Oxford Brookes University, paragraph 173

<sup>164</sup> Writtle College, paragraph 153

<sup>165</sup> Ashridge, paragraph 141

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item on committee agendas<sup>166</sup> and the successful resolution of issues raised by student representatives.<sup>167</sup> Research student representatives at one institution had recognised the challenge of gathering feedback from research students whose work is typically of an individual nature and had established a Facebook group to encourage participation.<sup>168</sup> Generally audit reports suggested that representation was effective. However, potential improvements were identified in a few reports where for example students were unaware of who their representatives were<sup>169</sup> or where committee attendance by student representatives was irregular.<sup>170</sup> In one case the absence of postgraduate research student representation on the Research Committee contributed to a wider recommendation that the institution concerned should 'keep under review the operation, terms of reference and membership of (its) central committees for the management of quality and standards.'<sup>171</sup> In another it was noted that although the institution's Code of Practice stated that postgraduate students had the right to be represented on any school research groups this was not the case in all schools. This also contributed to a wider recommendation concerning the need for the collective feedback mechanisms for research students to be strengthened.<sup>172</sup>

39 The audit reports identified a variety of mechanisms by which postgraduate research students were able to provide feedback on their experiences. In addition to the many informal opportunities for providing feedback, audit reports referred to a range of more formal liaison meetings and use of the student annual monitoring process to obtain feedback from individuals. Regular student forums, staff/student liaison meetings and advisory groups were considered by many audit teams to be effective at gathering the views of students. For example, at one institution the Postgraduate Advisory Group that met once a term provided a very useful arena for discussion between staff and students,<sup>173</sup> in another a Research Students' Forum was reported by students to be 'able to solve practical problems'<sup>174</sup> and at a third the Research Degree Convener held a termly consultation event with students.<sup>175</sup> However, one audit report identified an institution that had been slow in establishing a Student Staff Liaison Committee following a review,<sup>176</sup> and in another the audit team suggested that there was a need for 'more consistent feedback from all doctoral constituencies, including those on distance-learning programmes and overseas'.<sup>177</sup>

40 Institutions also used a variety of questionnaires to solicit feedback from postgraduate research students. The Higher Education Academy's biennial Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) was widely used enabling benchmarking against other institutions. Two institutions had decided to join the PRES to boost response rates that had been disappointing for their own internal surveys.<sup>178</sup> A variety of other surveys were conducted at many institutions including annual questionnaires, exit surveys<sup>179</sup> and surveys focussed on specific aspects of provision for example the examination process.<sup>180</sup> It was evident that in most cases institutions were making good use of the feedback gained from surveys. However, in one case although the Graduate School had carried out a detailed analysis of the PRES which it had subsequently published on its website not every school

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<sup>166</sup> Buckinghamshire New University, paragraph 173; Heythrop College, University of London, paragraph 154

<sup>167</sup> Edge Hill University, paragraph 155

<sup>168</sup> Oxford Brookes University, paragraph 117

<sup>169</sup> University of Newcastle upon Tyne, paragraph 132; Cranfield University, paragraph 132

<sup>170</sup> University of Derby, paragraph 153; University of Bolton, paragraph 203

<sup>171</sup> Ashridge, paragraph 142

<sup>172</sup> St Mary's University College, paragraph 78

<sup>173</sup> Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 118

<sup>174</sup> University of Westminster, paragraph 133

<sup>175</sup> Heythrop College, University of London, paragraph 153

<sup>176</sup> Writtle College, paragraph 156

<sup>177</sup> University of Derby, paragraph 153

<sup>178</sup> Brunel University, paragraph 152; Kingston University, paragraph 146

<sup>179</sup> Kingston University, paragraph 146; Liverpool John Moores University, paragraph 150

<sup>180</sup> Queen Mary, University of London, paragraph 118

was aware of the results,<sup>181</sup> and in another survey returns were low and students reported to the audit team that they were unaware of the survey itself or any actions arising from it.<sup>182</sup> In one further report it was noted that the institution concerned was aware of the need to make students more aware of the actions that had been taken in response to their written comments.

### The assessment of research students

41 Audit reports confirmed that, apart from for those awards with a taught component, the assessment of postgraduate research students was based on the submission of an appropriate, substantial body of work and an oral examination (viva voce or viva). The procedures in place for assessment were intended to be clear, rigorous, fair and consistent. Normally the oral examination was conducted by two examiners; one external and the other internal but independent of the project being examined. In the case of those institutions that were part of the University of London the internal examiner was typically appointed from a University of London institution other than the one at which the candidate was based. Some audit reports noted that responsibility for the approval of examiner appointments was vested in committees at either school/faculty or institutional level (12 reports). A few audit reports identified institutional arrangements for the appointment of additional examiners under certain circumstances, for example when the candidate was a member of staff,<sup>183</sup> or in one case where it was possible for a supervisor to act as an additional internal examiner when security clearance issues dictated.<sup>184</sup> A few audit reports mentioned the arrangements in place for preparing internal examiners for their role, including examples of compulsory training for inexperienced examiners.<sup>185</sup>

42 A substantial number (24 reports) of audit reports referred to arrangements for the appointment of an independent chairperson for postgraduate research student examinations. This was clearly an area of development at the time of these audits as a number of institutions had only just introduced the practice or were giving it consideration.<sup>186</sup> One audit team considered the selection of independent chairs for all research degree viva voce examinations from a panel of experienced staff to be a feature of good practice 'which provides for equity of treatment and robustness of outcome'.<sup>187</sup> While one institution had introduced independent chairs as a response to a suggestion from their earlier QAA review of research degree programmes,<sup>188</sup> another institution, having invited feedback from students, decided not to take up a similar suggestion but took other steps to enhance the fairness and consistency of its viva voce examinations.<sup>189</sup> In most cases where institutions were using independent chairs this was an institutional expectation. However, in a few examples their use was optional, occurred under specific circumstances or in one instance was subject to the agreement of the candidate.<sup>190</sup> One audit team concluded that it would be desirable for an institution to 'consider whether there might be an advantage in (the) use of independent chairs of examiners' particularly since in this case the examinations were often carried out by two external examiners.<sup>191</sup> In another institution the audit team observed that

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<sup>181</sup> Kings College London, paragraph 96

<sup>182</sup> London South Bank University, paragraph 72

<sup>183</sup> Birmingham City University, paragraph 158; Kingston University, paragraph 148; Sheffield Hallam University, paragraph 129; University of Cumbria, paragraph 152; University of Huddersfield, paragraph 187

<sup>184</sup> Cranfield University, paragraph 127

<sup>185</sup> University of Plymouth, paragraph 162; Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraph 165; University of Teesside, paragraph 157

<sup>186</sup> Brunel University, paragraph 154; Harper Adams University College, paragraph 118; Royal Holloway, University of London, paragraph 115

<sup>187</sup> London South Bank University, paragraph 150

<sup>188</sup> University of West London, paragraph 87

<sup>189</sup> Sheffield Hallam University, paragraph 113

<sup>190</sup> University of Teesside, paragraph 158

<sup>191</sup> The Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 121



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'the use of independent chairs in only some examinations had the potential to promote inconsistency',<sup>192</sup> and in a third, the audit team suggested that there should be a 'review of the use of independent chairs to further secure fairness and consistency in postgraduate research examination boards' based upon concerns that current practice was for the independent chair to withdraw while the examiners were reaching their judgement.<sup>193</sup>

43 In only one audit report was it noted that the supervisor was allowed by right to be in attendance at the examination<sup>194</sup> and in just another two institutions the supervisor could be invited to attend at the request of the student.<sup>195</sup> At one institution the vivas were open to staff and other students who had to indicate their wish to attend in advance and sign confidentiality agreements; a practice more common in some other countries.<sup>196</sup> Some audit reports (nine reports) described institutional procedures that required the examiners to submit independent written reports in advance of the oral examination followed by a joint report afterwards. Only a few audit reports referred to the steps taken to support students in preparing for their examinations such as practice examinations<sup>197</sup> and in one report an institution was encouraged to consider introducing mock vivas.<sup>198</sup> A 'candidacy' process that preceded the submission of the thesis in one institution was considered to be particularly thorough and helpful in providing advice, guidance and objective review through a variety of activities including a conference or seminar presentation, independent feedback on the draft thesis and a mock viva.<sup>199</sup>

## Representations, complaints and appeals arrangements for research students

44 The *Code of practice, Section 1* addresses complaints and appeals in precepts 26 and 27 respectively. These emphasise the need for formal procedures which the precept relating to appeals anticipates should be 'clear, impartial and well publicised'. Most (approximately 39) audit reports confirmed that effective arrangements were in place for dealing with postgraduate research student complaints and appeals. Examples were provided of institutions where the policies for postgraduate research students were the same as those for undergraduates,<sup>200</sup> while in other cases a separate policy was in place for postgraduate research student appeals.<sup>201</sup> The audit reports also noted in cases where postgraduate research degree provision was validated by another institution, that the complaints procedures were those of the institution hosting the students while appeals were dealt with using the procedures of the 'parent' institution.<sup>202</sup> In one case students were entitled to invoke the complaints and academic appeals procedure of either the college or the university, but not both. While the circumstances under which students would complain to either the college or university were clear, it was not clear under what circumstances the college would make decisions related to academic appeals or malpractice. This led the audit team to recommend the need to 'reconcile...minor inconsistencies...between the practical application of procedures and their documentation for students'.<sup>203</sup> In another institution an

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<sup>192</sup> University of Nottingham, paragraph 154

<sup>193</sup> Institute of Education, paragraph 162

<sup>194</sup> Queen Mary, University of London, paragraph 119

<sup>195</sup> University of Northumbria at Newcastle, paragraph 205; Norwich University College of the Arts, paragraph 133

<sup>196</sup> University of Manchester, paragraph 114

<sup>197</sup> University of Cumbria, paragraph 152; University of Teesside, paragraph 157; University of Westminster, paragraph 134

<sup>198</sup> Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 121

<sup>199</sup> Institute of Education, paragraph 155

<sup>200</sup> University of Nottingham, paragraph 157; University of Chester, paragraph 179

<sup>201</sup> Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 123; Kingston University, paragraph 150; Sheffield Hallam University, paragraph 132

<sup>202</sup> Newman University College, paragraph 185; Norwich University College of the Arts, paragraph 134; St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraph 177

<sup>203</sup> Royal Northern College of Music, paragraphs 31 and 96

audit team suggested that it might be helpful for appeal procedures to be reviewed to avoid a potential conflict of interest in cases where it was possible for a member of a panel responsible for considering the termination of a student's registration to also be a member of the panel convened to consider an appeal against that decision.<sup>204</sup>

45 A substantial number (~15) of the audit reports identify where complaints and appeals procedures can be located and the means by which students are made aware of them: through regulations, codes of practice and handbooks. In one institution students were provided with a separate student-friendly guidance leaflet, 'Guidance if you wish to make a complaint'.<sup>205</sup> In one audit report an absence of any reference to complaints and appeals procedures in the Research Student Handbook led the audit team to conclude that it would be advisable for the institution to make such information more readily accessible to students.<sup>206</sup> Another audit team found 'the route to information on appeals rather complicated to navigate' suggesting that it would be helpful if procedures were 'fully explained in one place'.<sup>207</sup> In one institution the earlier QAA special review had found that no timescales were provided for the processes for either complaints or appeals, a situation that had not been entirely rectified by the time of the audit. This resulted in the audit team suggesting that the university 'should consider making clear the various stages in the appeals process'.<sup>208</sup> The observation by an audit team that regulations concerning complaints and appeals in one institution were 'clear, comprehensive and regularly updated' contributed to a wider feature of good practice that commended the high quality of departmental research handbooks.<sup>209</sup>

46 At one institution the students' written submission had identified issues that had arisen through the independent advice service run by the Students' Union. In its Briefing Paper the institution had acknowledged that it was in the process of ensuring alignment of the complaints procedure for research students with its revised academic regulations. It was the view of the audit team that any ambiguity in this area should be avoided and that this supported their broader recommendation that the institution should 'ensure the timely production and dissemination of regulatory or policy documentation, including the timely notification to users of changes as and when they are made'.<sup>210</sup> There was no other evidence in the audit reports that there were excessive numbers of postgraduate research student complaints or appeals or that these were not being dealt with effectively. The isolated and relatively limited nature of issues identified and the affirmative nature of most of the reports suggest that the relevant precepts for this area in the *Code of practice* are generally being met.

## The themes in context

47 The themes identified in the audit reports which have been discussed in this paper relate to a number of developments that were emerging during the period over which the audits took place and/or relate to ongoing trends and initiatives. These include:

- QAA is in the process of replacing the *Code of practice* used as the reference point for this cycle of Institutional Audits with a new UK Quality Code for Higher Education. *Chapter B11: Research degrees* was published in June 2012.

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<sup>204</sup> Staffordshire University, paragraph 168

<sup>205</sup> University of Derby, paragraph 154

<sup>206</sup> Norwich University College of the Arts, paragraph 134

<sup>207</sup> Harper Adams University College, paragraph 120

<sup>208</sup> University of Cumbria, paragraph 153

<sup>209</sup> Imperial College London, paragraphs 123 and 134

<sup>210</sup> Queen Mary, University of London, paragraphs 44, 79, 90 and 122

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- In September 2011 QAA published an information document entitled *Doctoral degree characteristics* that provides a valuable explanation of different types of doctorates and is intended as a reference point for those responsible for doctoral programmes.<sup>211</sup>
- Since first publishing research degree qualification rates (RDQRs) in 2007, HEFCE has continued to seek to identify institutions whose returns to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) indicate a low proportion of research students qualifying within a given time, compared to the average in the sector. A fresh impetus for institutions to consider this key performance indicator has been the publication in May 2012 by HEFCE of a new methodology for the calculation of completion rates: 'Rates of qualification from postgraduate research degrees - Projected study outcomes of full-time students starting postgraduate research degrees in 2008-09 and 2009-10.'<sup>212</sup>
- An area which has received much attention since these audits is that of research ethics and integrity with much interest being generated by a number of high profile cases of research misconduct. A new 'Concordat to support research integrity' signed by HEFCE, Universities UK, Research Councils, the Wellcome Trust and government departments was published in July 2012. It aims to provide a national framework for good research conduct.
- Signatories to and supporters of the Concordat to support research integrity are committed to:
  - maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research
  - ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards
  - supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers
  - using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise
  - working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.<sup>213</sup>

This will no doubt have an impact on the way in which higher education institutions manage research governance and ethical procedures for postgraduate research student projects.

- In 2007-08, 55.7 per cent of first year postgraduate research students were UK domiciles. However, in the five-year period between 2002-03 and 2007-08 the numbers from overseas had grown at a much faster rate than those from the UK; those from the EU by 26 per cent to 3,797 and those from non-EU countries by 18 per cent to 9,275.<sup>214</sup>
- Much useful information for postgraduate research students is now provided by Vitae, the 'UK organisation championing the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes',<sup>215</sup> including the Researcher Development Statement (RDS) launched in 2010. The RDS that was derived from the earlier Researcher Development Framework and the Research Councils Joint Skills Statement 'sets out the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of effective and highly skilled researchers appropriate for a wide range of careers.'<sup>216</sup>

<sup>211</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Doctoral\\_characteristics.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Doctoral_characteristics.aspx)

<sup>212</sup> [www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/2012/201210/2012-10.pdf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/2012/201210/2012-10.pdf)

<sup>213</sup> [www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/TheConcordatToSupportResearchIntegrity.pdf](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/TheConcordatToSupportResearchIntegrity.pdf)

<sup>214</sup> [www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/corporate/docs/P/10-704-one-step-beyond-postgraduate-education.pdf](http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/corporate/docs/P/10-704-one-step-beyond-postgraduate-education.pdf)

<sup>215</sup> [www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/1218/Postgraduate-researchers.html](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/1218/Postgraduate-researchers.html)

<sup>216</sup> [www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/275981/Researcher-Development-Statement-RDS.html](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/275981/Researcher-Development-Statement-RDS.html)

- The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) *Postgraduate Education in the United Kingdom* report published in 2010 identifies that 'in recent years there has been a noticeable growth in courses (doctoral degrees) which incorporate a substantial taught element' and that are 'aimed at bridging the gap between the skills and knowledge acquired through doctoral study and their application in a non-academic work environment.' It is likely that such professional doctorates and New Route PhDs will be the focus of further activity in the coming years.<sup>217</sup>
- In 2010 the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) published an independent review of the provision of postgraduate study in the UK jointly commissioned by the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Minister for Higher Education and the Minister for Science and Innovation.<sup>218</sup> The report, *One Step Beyond: Making the most of postgraduate education*, provides a valuable analysis of:
  - the benefits of postgraduate education for the economy, employers, the higher education sector and individuals
  - access to postgraduate study and the potential barriers affecting the diversity of participation
  - the importance of postgraduate education in providing employers with the higher level skills they need
  - and the international competitiveness of postgraduate education in the UK.

## Trends

There were no separate papers covering postgraduate research in *Outcomes* Series 1 or 2. However, it is possible to identify some trends reported in other papers which can also be followed through to the papers already published in Series 3. The extent of the support provided to Graduate Teaching Assistants and other postgraduate research students involved in teaching was first referred to in the Series 1, *Staff support and development arrangements* paper, in conjunction with the support provided to part-time staff<sup>219</sup> (paragraphs 21-24). At this stage it was noted that all institutions had made at least some form of provision. However, it was beginning to emerge that, albeit in only a small minority of institutions, there were some cases where the uptake of training was variable. Aspects of the arrangements in seven institutions were considered to be features of good practice. In Series 2, *Staff support and development arrangements* (paragraphs 24-27)<sup>220</sup> this continued to be one of the areas where a number of examples of good practice were identified but which by that stage accounted for the largest number of recommendations. The current analysis indicates that this has remained a focus of audit teams and an area that needs further attention.

48 In January 2006 the Series 1 paper, *Programme monitoring arrangements* (paragraph 11)<sup>221</sup> made limited reference to the annual monitoring of postgraduate research provision. This was something that was clearly in the early stages of development, with, for example, the intention to collate data for cohort analysis in one institution being welcomed. In Series 2 this issue was picked up in the *Progression and completion* paper (paragraph 27)<sup>222</sup> which made it clear that the level of interest and activity had grown considerably.

<sup>217</sup> [www.hepi.ac.uk/files/45%20Postgraduate%20education%20full.pdf](http://www.hepi.ac.uk/files/45%20Postgraduate%20education%20full.pdf)

<sup>218</sup> [www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/corporate/docs/P/10-704-one-step-beyond-postgraduate-education.pdf](http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/corporate/docs/P/10-704-one-step-beyond-postgraduate-education.pdf)

<sup>219</sup> [www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-auditStaff-support-anddevelopment-arrangements.aspx](http://www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-auditStaff-support-anddevelopment-arrangements.aspx)

<sup>220</sup> [www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-audit---Staff-support-and-development---Second-series.aspx](http://www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-audit---Staff-support-and-development---Second-series.aspx)

<sup>221</sup> [www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-auditProgramme-monitoring-arrangements.aspx](http://www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-auditProgramme-monitoring-arrangements.aspx)

<sup>222</sup> [www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-audit-Second-series-Progression-and-completion-statistics.aspx](http://www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-audit-Second-series-Progression-and-completion-statistics.aspx)

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However, the difficulties experienced in many institutions of collecting and analysing completion data for postgraduate research students, due to their scattered and non-cohort nature, was highlighted. Interest from institutions and audit teams has continued to grow with the current focus on benchmarking and completion rates being prominent in the audit reports covered by this paper. It is apparent from the *Outcomes* papers on *Academic guidance* Series 1 (paragraphs 21-23),<sup>223</sup> and Series 2 (paragraph 19),<sup>224</sup> and in this report and the Series 3 paper, *Student engagement & support*,<sup>225</sup> that the support for postgraduate research students has been a particularly strong aspect and has continued to develop with those things that were once considered features of good practice becoming the norm.

## Conclusions

49 The audit reports considered by this *Outcomes* paper revealed the wide variation between institutions in terms of the scale and focus of postgraduate research provision. It was therefore a testament to the role played by *Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes (2004)* of the *Code of practice* that there was such a high degree of consistency in the processes and procedures adopted by institutions to manage these students, whether they were numbered in tens or hundreds, whether the provision was well established or relatively new and whether the institution had its own research degree awarding powers or was dependant on another validating partner. It was also clear that the desk based, special review of postgraduate research degree programmes, commissioned by the funding bodies and carried out by QAA in 2005-06 had contributed significantly to this consistency and the further enhancement of provision by encouraging institutions to reflect on the effectiveness of their alignment with the *Code of practice*. For example two areas where improvements and greater consistency were apparent had been in the strengthening of a team approach to supervision and in the use of independent chairs in PhD viva voce examinations.

50 This sound foundation was important in what was a period of growth in postgraduate research with some institutions working hard to establish an appropriate research environment for newly established provision while others had plans to significantly expand numbers as part of their wider research strategies. One particular development of note was the development in some institutions of professional doctorates to meet growing demand in this area.

51 Although the audit reports contained 54 recommendations compared to 29 features of good practice this does not indicate that postgraduate research provision in most institutions was not in anything but good health. Indeed, to the contrary, it seems from the audit reports that recent efforts to enhance this provision across the sector had resulted in generally high quality and consistent practice with fewer instances where audit teams were able to identify exceptional performance. However, two areas of activity did stand out as being in need of attention across a number of institutions. Nine recommendations that related to the annual monitoring of postgraduate research students at an institutional or school/faculty rather than an individual level reflected the greater emphasis being placed on the benchmarking of progression and completion data and the challenges faced by some institutions in gathering and utilising this effectively. The second area of concern arising from the recommendations in 16 audit reports was the extent to which postgraduate research students who were engaged in teaching or assessment were trained for and supported in these activities. It is valuable that the audit process identified the lack of consistency in this

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<sup>223</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-audit-Academic-guidance-support-and-supervision-and-personal-support-and-guidance-series-1.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-audit-Academic-guidance-support-and-supervision-and-personal-support-and-guidance-series-1.aspx)

<sup>224</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-audit-Second-series-Academic-and-personal-advice--guidance-and-support-for-students-guidance-a.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-audit-Second-series-Academic-and-personal-advice--guidance-and-support-for-students-guidance-a.aspx)

<sup>225</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-student-engagement.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-student-engagement.aspx)

area, enabling institutions to address an issue which has the potential to impact on the quality of the undergraduate learning experience.

52 Analysis of the audit reports has revealed a number of areas of strength in relation to postgraduate research provision. Of overarching significance was the effort made by institutions to provide an appropriate research environment in which postgraduate research students could flourish. The positive role played by graduate or doctoral schools in many institutions was of particular note. Similarly the absence of any recommendations relating to the availability of resources and the identification of a range of positive features confirm that these were generally fit for purpose and were making a valuable contribution to the quality of the student experience. The audit reports also indicate that the supervision of postgraduate students was in most cases being well managed and was effective in providing good quality support. The induction of students and their ongoing training in generic and research skills also emerged as an area of strength. Finally the audit reports also confirmed the consistency and appropriateness of arrangements for the assessment of postgraduate research students across institutions.

## Appendix A: Features of good practice relating to postgraduate research students

- the thorough and well-conceived plans for securing the research degree experience of the initial intake of students (Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln, paragraphs 179-182)
- the arrangements for admission, induction, supervision and support of its research students; in particular, the working agreement between supervisors and students (Buckinghamshire New University, paragraph 158)
- the depth, clarity, comprehensiveness and currency of the information the University produces for its staff and students (University of Chester, paragraphs 21, 23, 42, 55, 64, 69, 90, 123, 153, 162)
- the access to a wide range of high-quality resources which significantly enhance student learning opportunities (Cranfield University, paragraphs 73, 131)
- the proactive and responsive approach of the library service to user needs (Cranfield University, paragraphs 73, 74, 131)
- the thorough and well-monitored arrangements for the regular review of postgraduate research students (Cranfield University, paragraphs 126, 133)
- the scope and content of the research training programme for the MPhil/DMus (Guildhall School of Music and Drama, paragraphs 24, 65)
- the quality of departmental postgraduate research handbooks (Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, paragraph 123)
- the provision of well managed and resourced specialist library services (Institute of Education, paragraphs 82, 144)
- the Doctoral School *Code of practice* and handbook for students (Institute of Education, paragraph 140)
- the contribution of the Graduate School to the development of college-wide policies and practices for postgraduate research students (King's College London, paragraph 90)
- the use of electronic recording and performance indicators in the monitoring and review of students and in managing and enhancing the quality of their learning opportunities (Liverpool John Moores University, paragraphs 36, 149)
- the accreditation of research training for postgraduate research students through the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Skills (London South Bank University, paragraph 145)
- the use of trained and independent chairs for the viva voce examination of postgraduate research students, which provides for equity of treatment and robustness of outcome (London South Bank University, paragraph 150)
- the comprehensive training and development opportunities provided by Research Enterprise and Development for postgraduate research students (The Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraph 163)
- the range of ways in which the University is developing the employability of all of its students (University of Newcastle upon Tyne, paragraphs 87, 104, 130)
- the contribution of the Graduate School and its effective and complementary working relationship with the academic schools in providing a common support framework and sense of community for postgraduate research students across the University (The University of Northumbria at Newcastle, paragraph 188)
- the contribution of the graduate and student service centres for supporting and enhancing the student experience (University of Nottingham, paragraphs 98, 150)
- the systematic programme for admission, induction and support of postgraduate research students at both the institutional and school level (University of Teesside, paragraph 146)



## Postgraduate research students

- the framework for the management and development of research degree programmes (University of Ulster, paragraph 164)
- the positive impact the Developmental Engagements have had upon the provision of a more consistent postgraduate research student experience (University of Westminster, paragraphs 117, 126)
- the 'feedback-hungry' culture and responsiveness to matters raised by students (Ashridge, paragraphs 82,141)
- consistent and systematic oversight of the research student experience (University of Bolton, paragraph 226)
- the structured approach to the continuous professional development of the teaching assistants (The Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 81)
- the Research Forum, which offers a focus and support for a range of research activities from which students at all levels of study benefit (The Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 100)
- the development and implementation of eProg to support postgraduate research students (University of Manchester, paragraph 109)
- the development opportunities provided by the Critical Commentary journal (Newman University College, paragraphs 99,181)
- the comprehensive support provided to postgraduate research students throughout their programme (Norwich University College of the Arts, paragraph 131)
- the role of the Postgraduate Research Coordinator in supporting the postgraduate research student community and its supervisors (St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraph 167)

## Appendix B: Recommendations relating to postgraduate research students

- implement consistently the requirements for training and support for postgraduate research students who teach and who conduct assessment (University of Bedfordshire, paragraph 120)
- assess the needs of all postgraduate research students who are engaged in teaching and provide appropriate training where necessary (Birkbeck University of London, paragraph 84)
- ensure that all participating postgraduate research students are formally prepared for teaching and assessment roles (Buckinghamshire New University, paragraph 172)
- ensure that Academic Board, through its appropriate institutional-level committees, makes full use of the annual and periodic review processes to provide greater transparency and consistency in its oversight of academic standards and quality of learning opportunities in both its taught and research degree programmes (Canterbury Christ Church University, paragraphs 21, 29, 39, 42-43, 51, 76, 151, 177)
- consider the minimum level of structured support required for postgraduate research students in preparation for teaching and assessment (Canterbury Christ Church University, paragraphs 10, 181)
- that the University considers ways of ensuring that postgraduate research students have received the support to which they are entitled before they undertake teaching and/or assessment (University of Chester, paragraph 175)
- monitor the success of postgraduate research programmes against appropriate internal and/or external indicators and targets in all faculties and at university level (Cranfield University, paragraph 122)
- ensure the consistent application of the policy that all postgraduate research students who teach receive appropriate training (University of Derby, paragraph 160)
- strengthen the oversight of postgraduate research degree programmes at both institutional and school levels by improving the quality of its progression and completion data (University of East London, paragraphs 30, 94-95)
- ensure that all research students who teach and/or assess are formally prepared for these roles (University of East London, paragraphs 54, 91)
- complete its revision of the training programmes for postgraduate research students and their supervisors (Edge Hill University, paragraph 153)
- implement and fully operate procedures for the rigorous monitoring of the success of postgraduate research programmes against internal and/or external indicators and targets (University of Gloucester, paragraph 143)
- establish clearly defined mechanisms for formal progress reviews of postgraduate research students (University of Gloucester, paragraph 152)
- to revise procedures relating to research students' training, clarifying the means of delivery and the expectations placed on students, in particular making explicit which aspects of the training are mandatory (Harper Adams University College, paragraph 115)
- formalise the University's processes for the ethical approval of research projects and the appropriate reporting of such approvals (University of Huddersfield, paragraph 184)
- ensure that all postgraduate research students receive appropriate training before they undertake teaching duties (University of Huddersfield, paragraph 185)
- review supervisory arrangements for postgraduate research students to secure the advantages of the supervisory team approach outlined in section 1 of the *Code of practice* (Institute of Education, paragraph 150)

## Postgraduate research students

- review the use of independent chairs to further secure fairness and consistency in postgraduate research examination boards (Institute of Education, paragraph 162)
- provide more guidance on how many postgraduate research students a supervisor might be expected to manage (Liverpool John Moores University, paragraph 151)
- ensure that postgraduate research students undertaking teaching are provided with adequate guidance and support (Liverpool John Moores University, paragraph 155)
- to strengthen institutional oversight of the outcomes of annual monitoring conducted by schools (University of Nottingham, paragraphs 34,131)
- extend the academic scrutiny of external examiner reports at institutional level (University of Nottingham, paragraphs 45,156)
- develop an institutional response to postgraduate research student progression and completion rates and feedback, and strengthen the relationship of the Graduate School with the faculties and the Quality Support Unit to facilitate institutional oversight of the postgraduate research student experience (University of Plymouth, paragraphs 158, 167)
- ensure that all postgraduate research students involved in the assessment of students are appropriately trained and prepared for this work (University of , paragraph 153)
- clarify the requirement for research supervisor training (University of Ulster, paragraph 167)
- ensure that the University's policy on training for postgraduate students who teach is adhered to and consistently applied (University of Westminster, paragraph 132)
- keep under review the operation, terms of reference and membership of central committees responsible for the management of quality and standards (Ashridge, paragraphs 22,142)
- ensure the validation, accreditation or approval status of all programmes is clearly indicated in all information for intending students (The Arts University College Bournemouth, paragraph 111)
- ensure that students are not made a formal offer to a programme until the appropriate legal agreement, regulatory framework, resources and support are in place (The Arts University College Bournemouth, paragraph 116)
- limit the total number of postgraduate research supervisory teams to which a member of staff may belong and monitor this at institutional level (Birmingham City University, paragraph 150)
- at institutional level, make more explicit its monitoring and consideration of postgraduate research degree completion rates against internal and external benchmarks (Birmingham City University, paragraph 154)
- resolve its position on whether postgraduate research students should have second supervisors (The Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 108)
- consider whether there might be advantage in use of independent chairs of examiners and mock vivas in the assessment, and preparation for assessment, of postgraduate research students (The Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 121)
- develop a purposeful approach to Personal Development Planning for all students (The Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraphs 77, 116)
- expedite the recommendation of the QAA special review of research degree programmes (2009) to introduce benchmarking and performance measurement in monitoring the performance of postgraduate research students (University of Cumbria, paragraph 155)
- ensure that the terms of reference of the Research and Development Committee and the Research Degrees Committee accurately reflect their activities and relationship (London Metropolitan University, paragraph 9)
- ensure that all research students are supervised by a supervisory team which includes a co-supervisor (University of Manchester, paragraph 106)

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- make information on research misconduct and student appeals and complaints procedures readily accessible to postgraduate research students by including these procedures in, for example, the Research Student Handbook (, paragraph 134)
- ensure that all postgraduate research students who participate in teaching and/or the assessment of students receive appropriate training prior to undertaking these duties (Oxford Brookes University, paragraphs 111, 173 )
- ensure that all student handbooks provide, in a timely way, complete, consistent and current information consonant with University regulations (Oxford Brookes University, paragraphs 159, 160, 176, 188)
- to ensure the timely production and appropriate dissemination of regulatory or policy documentation, including the timely notification to users of changes as and when they are made (Queen Mary, University of London, paragraphs 44, 79, 90,122)
- to establish a mechanism which ensures that any research student undertaking teaching, assessment or similar duties has received appropriate training (Queen Mary, University of London, paragraph 87)
- to develop guidance for staff in their support and progress-monitoring of research students studying off-campus, drawing on existing good practice (Queen Mary, University of London, paragraph 105)
- to reconcile the various minor inconsistencies, relating to award classification and student appeals, between the practical application of procedures and their documentation for students (Royal Northern College of Music, paragraphs 31, 96)
- to clarify the lines of deliberative and executive responsibility for postgraduate research degree programmes, with particular reference to the function and remit of the Graduate School (Royal Holloway, University of London, paragraph 98)
- continue to address issues relating to the completion rates of postgraduate research students (St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraph 165)
- strengthen collective feedback mechanisms for research degree students (St Mary's University College, paragraph 78)
- require the School of Advanced Study to:...develop and implement an approach to annual monitoring that ensures an holistic evaluation of each taught and research programme (paragraphs 19, 68);... use, as a matter of routine, student management information in assuring itself of the quality and academic standards of taught and research degrees (paragraphs 28, 32); ensure that all staff involved in the admission of students to taught and research programmes receive timely information, support and training (paragraphs 45, 65)... (University of London)
- require the School of Advanced Study to develop and implement a systematic approach to its engagement with students, with particular reference to:...making available and ensuring awareness of information about English language support (University of London, paragraphs 49, 66)
- that graduate teaching assistants are given appropriate induction and training for their teaching role prior to starting their duties and receive regular formal feedback thereafter (Writtle College, paragraph 153)
- that the College ensures that comprehensive induction for all new postgraduate research students and training for new PhD supervisors is delivered in a timely manner (Writtle College, paragraph 157)
- ensure that research students engaged in teaching receive appropriate training prior to commencing any teaching or assessment (York St John University, paragraph 86)
- bring to a timely conclusion its review of the instruction, advice and guidance for research degree recruitment interview panels, as recommended by the QAA special review of research degree programmes in 2009 (York St John University, paragraph 85)

## **Appendix C: Methodology used for producing papers in *Outcomes from Institutional Audit***

The analysis of the Institutional Audit reports which underlies the Outcomes papers is based on the headings set out in Annexes B and C of the Handbook for Institutional Audit: England and Northern Ireland (2006, revised 2009).

For each published Institutional Audit report, the text is taken from the report and technical annex published on QAA's website and converted to plain text format. The resulting files are checked for accuracy and introduced into a qualitative research software package, QSR NVivo8®. The software provides a wide range of tools to support indexing and searching and allows features of interest to be coded for further investigation. The basic coding of the reports follows the template headings set out in the Handbook. Further specific analysis is based on the more detailed text of the technical annex.

An audit team's judgements, its identification of features of good practice and its recommendations appear in the introduction to the technical annex, with cross-references to the main text where the grounds for identifying a feature of good practice, offering a recommendation and making a judgement are set out. These cross-references are used to locate features of good practice and recommendations to the particular sections of the report to which they refer.

Individual Outcomes papers are written by experienced Institutional Auditors and Audit Secretaries. To assist in compiling the papers, reports produced using QSR NVivo8® are made available to authors to provide a broad picture of the overall distribution of features of good practice and recommendations in particular areas, as seen by the audit teams. The authors then consider this evidence in the context of the more detailed explanations given in the main text of the technical annex to establish themes for further discussion.

## Appendix D: The Institutional Audit reports

### 2009-10

Birkbeck, University of London  
Bishop Grosseteste University College  
Lincoln  
Brunel University  
Buckinghamshire New University  
Canterbury Christ Church University  
Conservatoire for Dance and Drama  
Cranfield University  
Edge Hill University  
Guildhall School of Music and Drama  
Harper Adams University College  
Imperial College of Science,  
Technology and Medicine  
Institute of Education  
King's College, London  
Liverpool John Moores University  
London South Bank University  
The Manchester Metropolitan University  
Staffordshire University  
University of Bedfordshire  
University of Chester  
University of Derby  
University of East London  
University of Gloucestershire  
University of Huddersfield  
University of Newcastle upon Tyne  
University of Northumbria at Newcastle  
University of Nottingham  
University of Plymouth  
University of Teesside  
University of Ulster  
University of Westminster

### 2010-11

The Arts University College at  
Bournemouth  
Ashridge  
Birmingham City University  
The College of Law  
The Courtauld Institute for Art  
Heythrop College  
Kingston University  
London Metropolitan University  
London School of Economics and  
Political Science  
Newman University College, Birmingham  
Oxford Brookes University  
Norwich University College of the Arts  
Queen Mary, University of London  
Royal Holloway, University of London  
Royal Northern College of Music  
Sheffield Hallam University  
St. George's Hospital Medical School  
St. May's University College,  
Twickenham  
University College Birmingham  
University College of Plymouth St. Mark  
and St. John  
University of Bolton  
University of Cumbria  
University of London  
University of London International  
Programmes  
University of Manchester  
University of West London  
University of Worcester  
Writtle College  
York St. John University  
York St. John University

The full text of the Institutional Audit reports is available from:  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/default.aspx)

## **Appendix E: Titles in Outcomes from Institutional Audit: 2009-11**

Assessment and feedback  
Postgraduate research students  
Collaborative provision arrangements

All published *Outcomes* papers can be found at  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/ImprovingHigherEducation/Pages/reviews.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/ImprovingHigherEducation/Pages/reviews.aspx)

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