Outcomes from institutional audit
Staff support and development

Second series

Summary

Consideration of the 59 institutional audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006 indicates that, broadly speaking, staff support and development is a strength of the higher education sector.

The published audit reports show that institutions make considerable efforts to ensure that staff development activities contribute to their overall strategic aims. In some cases this alignment is regarded as a feature of good practice. The reports also note a number of examples where the needs of individual members of staff feature prominently in staff development planning. In the small number of cases where strategic frameworks or the details of delivery are unclear, the reports make recommendations.

The audit reports also identify good practice in the structures and processes put in place to plan, implement and monitor staff development activity. These include the coordinating role of central staff and/or educational development bodies, and the presence of staff development coordinators in academic units. In the small number of cases where the organisation of staff development could be improved, recommendations are made.

In addition to the coordinating role noted above, it is clear from the audit reports that central staff and/or educational development units also provide a wide range of opportunities for staff development, including induction courses, certificated teaching and learning programmes to support new or inexperienced staff, and programmes for the continuing professional development of established staff. The role played by these central units is identified as a feature of good practice in a large number of the reports. Both the breadth of provision offered by these and other units, and their high take-up by different categories of staff, are regarded as good practice in several reports. Recommendations are made in only a small number of cases where the take-up of such opportunities is low or where there are obvious gaps in the institution's staff development portfolio.

Greater variability, however, is evident in institutions' approaches to the induction and continuing professional development of part-time and visiting staff, and postgraduate research students undertaking teaching duties. While features of good practice are identified in some institutions, the largest number of recommendations concern the uneven uptake of staff development opportunities by these groups of staff. In most cases recommendations focus on the need to ensure consistency of practice across academic units, and the need for institutions to take an overview.

Some variability is also evident in institutions' use of peer observation and staff appraisal schemes. While good practice is identified in a number of audit reports, recommendations are made where there are significant variations in the implementation of peer observation or appraisal, and in particular where there are barriers to the identification of staff development needs or to the dissemination of good practice. Other staff development arrangements in support of dissemination, however, attracted a considerable number of features of good practice, and only occasional recommendations for improvement.

Preface

An objective of institutional audit is 'to contribute, in conjunction with other mechanisms, to the promotion and enhancement of high-quality in teaching and learning'. To provide institutions and other stakeholders with access to timely information on the findings of its institutional audits, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) produces short working papers that describe features of good practice and summarise recommendations from the audit reports. Since 2005 these have been published under the generic title *Outcomes from institutional audit* (hereafter, *Outcomes...*). The first series of these papers drew on the findings of the audit reports published between 2003 and November 2004. This paper is based on the findings of the institutional audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006. It includes a brief section at the end of the paper comparing its key features with those of its predecessor in the first series of *Outcomes...* papers.

A feature of good practice in institutional audit is considered to be a process, a practice, or a way of handling matters which, in the context of the particular institution, is improving, or leading to the improvement of, the management of quality and/or academic standards, and learning and teaching. *Outcomes...* papers are intended to provide readers with pointers to where features of good practice relating to particular topics can be located in the published audit reports. Each *Outcomes...* paper therefore identifies the features of good practice in individual reports associated with the particular topic and their location in the main report. Although all features of good practice are listed, in the interests of brevity not all are discussed in this paper. In the initial listing in paragraph 7, the first reference is to the numbered or bulleted lists of features of good practice at the end of each institutional audit report, the second to the relevant paragraphs in Section 2 of the main report. Throughout the body of this paper, references to features of good practice in the institutional audit reports give the institution's name and the paragraph number from Section 2 of the main report.

It should be emphasised that the features of good practice mentioned in this paper should be considered in their proper institutional context, and that each is perhaps best viewed as a stimulus to reflection and further development rather than as a model for emulation. A note on the topics identified for the first and second series of *Outcomes...* papers can be found at Appendix 3 (page 22).

As noted above, this second series of *Outcomes...* papers is based on the 59 institutional audit reports published by August 2006 and the titles of papers are in most cases the same as their counterparts in the first series of *Outcomes....* Like the first series of *Outcomes…* papers, those in the second series are perhaps best seen as 'work in progress'. Although QAA retains copyright in the contents of the *Outcomes...* papers, they can be freely downloaded from the QAA website and cited, with acknowledgement.

Introduction and general overview

1   This paper is based on a review of the outcomes of the 59 institutional audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006 (see Appendix 1, page 18). A note on the methodology used to produce this and other *Outcomes... papers* can be found at Appendix 4 (page 24).

2   The institutional audit process introduced in England in 2002 recognised the importance of staff support and development in institutions' quality management arrangements by making provision for the report of each audit to describe and analyse the institution's staff support and development arrangements and to comment on their effectiveness.

3   This paper is principally based on the section in the audit reports on 'the assurance of quality of teaching through staff support and development', with further material drawn from the section on 'the assurance of quality of teaching staff: appointment, appraisal and reward'. Under both headings audit teams were asked to outline relevant institutional procedures, and to compare their findings both with the account given in the institution's self-evaluation document, and with the views expressed by staff. Teams were also asked to consider the extent to which institutional procedures were applied consistently, to identify any gaps or good practice, and to conclude whether an institutional overview was maintained. While the focus of the enquiries related to the staff development opportunities offered to teaching staff, some reports note where opportunities were offered more widely.

4   As noted in the paper on this topic in the first series of *Outcomes...*, institutions frequently stated that their most important resource is their academic and support staff. Not surprisingly, therefore, many placed a high degree of importance on supporting and developing such staff in line with institutional priorities, the requirements of academic units and individual development needs.

5   The review of the published audit reports revealed that most of the institutions had established suitable and effective arrangements to support and develop their staff. Virtually all had established:

●   induction programmes for staff new to the institution

●   mentoring schemes to support staff in the early stages of their careers

●   training programmes for the initial professional development of academic staff

●   appraisal schemes

●   peer review or observation schemes for teaching

●   continuing professional development programmes

●   arrangements to support development at departmental, school and faculty level

●   arrangements to support attendance at regional or national events for the purpose of staff development.

6   Overall, a review of the audit reports suggests that basic provision was found to be sound. The reports provided considerable evidence of good practice within the sector; just under three-quarters of the published reports identified features of good

practice and many of these were linked to several areas of the institution's work. Scope for improvement was noted in a smaller number of institutions, with just over one third of the reports containing recommendations.

Features of good practice

7   As with the previous Outcomes... paper on this subject, the institutional audit reports identified a large number of features of good practice, often concerning a range of different areas of staff development provision. These factors militate against the practice of quoting in full and dividing the features by topic, as adopted in other papers in this series. It has therefore been thought appropriate to give illustrative references under a range of possible headings. Although features of good practice in relation to staff development are identified in 41 reports, they are frequently referred to more than once below.

Strategic approaches to staff support and development

- University of Ulster, 215 (iii); 82 and 91
- Queen Mary, University of London, 245 (third bullet point); 114, 122 and 127
- University College London, 153 (iii); 61
- St George's Hospital Medical School, 188 (ii); 93, 97, 98 and 183
- Liverpool John Moores University, 233 (first bullet point); 93-7
- Staffordshire University, 251 (vii); 125
- University of Teesside, 219 (i); 82 and 88
- University of Worcester, 250 (ii and iv); 96 and 205
- The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, 211 (iii); 116

Alignment of staff development to meet both institutional and individual needs

- University of Derby, 294 (first bullet point); 34 and 136
- Leeds Metropolitan University, 217 (ii); 93 and 95
- University of East London, 256 (iv); 111

Institutional structures for staff support and development

- St George's Hospital Medical School, 188 (ii); 93 and 98
- Liverpool John Moores University, 233 (first bullet point); 94
- University of Teesside, 219 (i); 85
- University College Winchester, 257 (iii); 101

Staff development providers

- City University, 320 (i); 111
- University of Nottingham, 302 (ii); 99
- Goldsmiths College, University of London, 213 (iv); 101
- Queen Mary, University of London, 245 (third bullet point); 114, 122 and 127

- Royal Holloway, University of London, 215 (ii); 43, 47, 48, 98 and 99
- University College London, 153 (iii); 61, 65 and 66
- St George's Hospital Medical School, 188 (iii); 96
- University of Hertfordshire, 204 (iv); 84
- London Metropolitan University, 188 (i); 33 and 74
- Liverpool John Moores University, 233 (first and third bullet points); 93-97, 108-12
- University of Plymouth, 244 (iv); 108
- Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, 238 (iv); 92 and 96
- London School of Economics and Political Science, 50 and 57
- Thames Valley University, 253 (ii); 95

Comprehensiveness and quality of staff development opportunities

- Cranfield University, 196 (iii); 89
- University of Ulster, 215 (iii); 82 and 91
- University of Hertfordshire, 204 (iv); 85 and 87
- University of Northumbria at Newcastle, 254 (iii); 101-6
- University of Teesside, 219 (i); 77, 82, 85 and 88
- University of Chester, 159 (ii); 78
- Liverpool Hope University, 236 (iv); 39 and 99
- Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, 134 (iv); 79
- University of Worcester, 250 (iv); 205
- Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, 229 (iii); 117 and 121

Development for leaders and managers

- St George's Hospital Medical School, 188 (ii); 97
- De Montfort University, 334 (iv); 133
- University of East London, 256 (ii); 38 and 56

Development for research supervisors

- De Montfort University, 334 (iv); 134

Engagement of staff with development opportunities

- University of Hertfordshire, 204 (iv); 87
- University of Central England in Birmingham, 219 (ii); 91
- University of Worcester, 250 (iv); 205
- Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, 229 (iii); 117 and 121

Induction for new staff

- University of Gloucestershire, 316 (vii); 131
- University of Teesside, 219 (i); 77

Initial professional development for new academic staff

- The Queen's University of Belfast, 260 (fourth bullet point); 99
- Royal Holloway, University of London, 215 (iii); 94 and 98
- University College London, 153 (iii); 62-3
- University of Teesside, 219 (i); 84
- Liverpool Hope University, 236 (iv), 90 and 94

Professional development for part-time staff, graduate teaching assistants and technical staff

- The Queen's University of Belfast, 260 (fourth bullet point); 99 and 102
- Birkbeck College, University of London, 177; 74
- University of Derby, 294 (first bullet point); 136
- Liverpool John Moores University, 233 (first bullet point); 95
- University of East London, 256 (iv); 104 and 112
- Liverpool Hope University, 236 (iv); 99
- Henley Management College, 213 (iv); 104
- Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, 134 (iv); 79 and 81
- University of Central England in Birmingham, 219 (ii); 91
- University of Worcester, 250 (iv); 205
- Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, 229 (iii); 121

Development of staff in partner institutions

- Goldsmiths College, University of London, 213 (i); 32 and 118
- University of Teesside, 219 (i); 84
- University of Central England in Birmingham, 219 (iii); 91

Peer review of teaching

- University College London, 153 (iii); 64
- University of Hertfordshire, 204 (ii); 82
- University of Northumbria at Newcastle, 254 (iii); 106
- University of Chester, 184 (ii); 78

Links between appraisal/performance review and development, and staff development

- University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 269 (iii); 110
- Imperial College London, 302 (ii); 96, 103 and 112
- University of Hertfordshire, 204 (iv); 74 and 82
- Liverpool Hope University, 236 (iv); 143
- London School of Economics and Political Science, 49

Dissemination of good practice

- The Queen's University of Belfast, 260 (fourth bullet point); 102
- Goldsmiths College, University of London, 213 (iv); 101
- Queen Mary, University of London, 245 (third and fourth bullet points); 115 and 122
- University College London, 153 (iii); 65
- University of Gloucestershire, 316 (ii); 60
- Imperial College London, 302 (iii) 114 and 117
- University of Hertfordshire, 204 (iv); 83
- London Metropolitan University, 188 (i and ii); 33
- Liverpool John Moores University, 233 (first bullet point); 97
- University of Plymouth, 244 (iv); 108
- London South Bank University, 200 (first bullet point); 86
- University of Sunderland, 206 (ii and iii); 96 and 97
- Heythrop College, 200 (ii); 102

Others

- Royal Holloway, University of London, 215 (iv); 101 [the organisation of sabbaticals in support of research]
- University of Westminster, 241 (i); 95 [staff development in support of equal opportunities and diversity]
- Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, 134 (v); 80 [the role of a disability project in raising the disability awareness of staff at all levels]
- American InterContinental University - London, 217 (iv); 111 [staff development days]
- Heythrop College, 200 (iii); 105 [the consensus and staff engagement achieved in support of a change of culture]
- Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, 229 (iv); 121 [staff enthusiasm and commitment to College aims].

Themes

8   A consideration of the features of good practice and recommendations in the institutional audit reports which relate to staff support and development suggests that the following broad themes merit further discussion:

- strategic approaches to staff support and development
- institutional structures for staff support and development
- the range of staff development opportunities offered, and the extent of participation by staff
- support and development for new full-time academic staff

- support and development for part-time teachers and graduate teaching assistants
- peer observation as a mechanism for assuring and enhancing the quality of teaching
- performance review/appraisal as a mechanism for eliciting and meeting the development needs of academic staff
- the development of staff in partner institutions
- the role of staff development in disseminating good practice.

Strategic approaches to staff support and development

9   One of the trends across the higher education sector in the past few years has been the alignment of staff development with institutional objectives and priorities, with the aim of enabling staff to contribute better to the latter. In many institutions overall strategies for staff development provided direction for this element of their activity. One institutional audit report noted good practice where the provision of staff development was closely aligned to institutional priorities, and where staff development policy had 'evolved to reflect changing needs and priorities' [The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, 116]. Another report noted that faculties were required to produce three-year rolling staff profiles, to address their changing needs and to allow the institution to plan the recruitment, retention, reward and development of staff. In addition, a process of annual staff development audit ensured that development plans emerged both from local needs and institutional priorities, and wider developments in the sector [University of Ulster, 82 and 91]. A further report found good practice in the approach of the educational and staff development unit, both to general staff development and in support of distributed and e-learning, in an institution where a newly-adopted single virtual learning environment was intended to become a vehicle for the development and delivery of some modules, and for student information [Queen Mary, University of London, 114, 122 and 127].

10   Provision for staff development was frequently directed by, or aligned with, institutional strategies for staff development, human resources, learning, teaching and assessment. The reports noted where staff development aligned with research strategies or activity, with one report identifying as good practice the positive effect of research on teaching and learning and the organisation of sabbaticals to support this [Royal Holloway, University of London, 101].

11   In addition to strategic priorities, staff development provision often responds to development needs identified through annual appraisals, peer observation of teaching and other mechanisms. A number of audit reports identified features of good practice in institutions where there was a 'coherent and integrated alignment of institutional, faculty and school priorities with the individual development needs and wishes of various groups of staff'. In one case, staff reported that their personal development needs were effectively identified through appraisal and 'seriously addressed' [Leeds Metropolitan University, 93 and 95]. In another, the institution had taken 'an inclusive and proactive approach in evaluating and responding to staff development needs', with central planning being informed by similar activities in academic units (for example faculties, schools or departments), and with much staff development

being organised locally, by negotiation, and supplemented by high-quality documentation and online resources [University of Derby, 34 and 136].

12   In a few instances, the audit reports identified areas where strategic direction for staff development could be improved. One recommendation in this category related to an institution which had recently decided that its staff should be active in scholarship and research and had put some support in place. However, the report noted that no remission from teaching was given to staff pursuing research degrees, and the level of scholarly activity or research expected of staff was unclear. The report recommended that the institution develop processes to further encourage staff engagement with research as part of its overall development programme.

13   Academic units often have their own staff development or human resource strategies, which seek to align staff development provision with both institutional and academic priorities and with personal development needs. In one institution, faculty learning, teaching and assessment committees had recently been set up to develop strategies to inform central priorities, including staff development. The relevant audit report noted the apparent absence of an overarching framework for the operation of central and local strategies and recommended that one be put in place in support of teaching quality.

Institutional structures for staff support and development

14   Most institutional audit reports found that institutions had effective structures for the planning, implementing and monitoring of staff development activity. One institution had identified a core set of skills for all staff, which were supported by a range of activities. Staff were engaged with institutional and national developments in teaching and learning, and were well informed of dissemination processes and support. Good practice was found in this institution's broad, integrated approach to staff development, in which the work of the centre for staff development and the learning development unit were closely coordinated [Liverpool John Moores University, 94]. In addition, several reports identified as good practice the ways in which staff development coordinators, located in academic units, aided the organisation of staff development activity. In one institution, such coordinators were linked with a similar officer in the personnel department, and they met formally twice a year to coordinate staff development activity in line with strategic priorities [St George's Hospital Medical School, 93 and 98]. In another institution, school learning and teaching coordinators were responsible for being aware of good practice and for promoting innovative approaches to learning and teaching. The report noted their support for staff pursuing learning and teaching fellowships, their close involvement in staff development away days and the work of the Learning and Teaching Committee, and found their activities to be a feature of good practice [University College Winchester, 101].

15   Most institutions have central units responsible for providing staff development opportunities in line with institutional priorities and locally-identified needs. Sometimes a distinction is made between staff development units and academic development units, or those responsible for promoting the use of new technology in learning. Nearly one in four of the audit reports identified good practice in the active

approach taken by such units. In one institution, for example, the Education Development Centre focused on continuing professional development, e-learning and research into higher education pedagogy. The Centre offered a broad range of support to academic departments, including a 'bespoke' service to provide guidance and staff development courses at the instigation of the academic community [Royal Holloway, University of London, 99]. In another institution, the Educational Development and Learning Technologies unit produced a range of courses that were recognised as being of considerable benefit, as well as guides, an internal learning and teaching journal, and an annual learning and teaching conference. The audit report identified the unit's work in supporting staff, and especially its guide, *Designing your programmes and modules*, as a feature of good practice [University of Plymouth, 108].

16   In some specific instances, the audit reports noted the role of central units in:

● delivering certificated professional development programmes for new staff [for example, City University, 111; Royal Holloway, University of London, 98; University of Hertfordshire, 85; 74; University of Plymouth, 108; Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, 92 and 96]

● supporting staff in the development of e-learning materials [for example, Goldsmiths College, University of London 101; University College London, 65; Queen Mary, University of London, 127; Royal Holloway, University of London, 43; London Metropolitan University, 74; Liverpool John Moores University, 108-12]

● leading and coordinating enhancement in teaching and learning across the institution [for example, University of Nottingham, 99; Thames Valley University, 95]

● the dissemination of good practice (see also paragraphs 35-37 of this paper).

17   In a small number of cases, audit reports noted opportunities to improve the structures supporting staff development. In one case, where staff development arrangements were considered to be 'broadly effective', the report noted that the route by which Senate was made aware of staff development activities and needs was unclear. The report encouraged the institution to consider how the Senate and Council could be assisted to secure a clearer and more strategic understanding of the contribution of such activities. In another case, where staff development was provided by a number of different offices, and where those elements delegated to academic units were inconsistently applied, the report noted that that it was unclear where responsibility lay for seeing that such activity was appropriately focused and coordinated, or for ensuring that different types of staff undertook training appropriate to their needs. The report recommended that, as part of a planned review, the institution 'give attention to defining a clear locus of central coordination for development activity'. In a new institution with a number of staff development providers, the report saw a need for greater coherence. While recognising the work being undertaken to ensure that the development programme for new staff met faculty requirements for discipline-related content, and to implement a centrally-devised performance management programme, the report identified a need for the multiple providers to work more effectively with each other as well as with faculties.

The range of staff development opportunities offered, and the extent of participation by staff

Many institutional audit reports noted positively the range of staff development provision institutions made available to their staff, with some citing the general breadth and depth of such provision as a feature of good practice. For example, in one case the report noted the very wide range of development opportunities and support available to all staff, the high take-up of such opportunities and the value placed upon them [Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, 121]. In another institution - where the quality, range and accessibility of staff development was identified as a feature of good practice - the relevant report noted in particular training that supported quality and standards, and was provided to new supervisors, newly appointed external examiners, chairs of recruitment panels, chairs and clerks of validation and review panels and examination boards [University of Hertfordshire, 87]. Other reports noted where staff development opportunities were also extended to non-academic staff supporting teaching and learning.

18   Several audit reports also cited good practice in specific areas of development, including leadership and management for senior staff [De Montfort University, 133; St George's Hospital Medical School, 97], quality leadership in teaching and learning [University of East London, 38 and 56], and research supervision [De Montfort University, 134].

19   In a few cases, however, audit reports identified opportunities to extend the scope of staff development provision. One report found that while the institution had recently improved its systems for utilising progression and completion data, use across academic units remained variable and it recommended that engagement with the new system might be aided by staff development in the use of statistical data. Other reports recommended the introduction of a planned management development programme to support senior managers and staff support for research supervisors.

20   Some institutional audit reports noted the extensive take-up of staff development opportunities by members of staff and a number of reports identified good practice in high levels of participation, which reflected the embedding of staff development in institutional cultures. One report drew attention to the wide range of different types of staff, including staff on fractional contacts and staff from collaborative partners, who engaged in development opportunities [University of Central England in Birmingham, 91]. Another report commented that the 'extent to which development opportunities were available to, and taken up by, all levels of staff, including part-time and support staff, was particularly striking' [University of Worcester, 205; see also University of Hertfordshire, 87; Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College 36 and 96; Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, 121].

21   In a small number of cases, however, participation in staff development opportunities was not widespread, or varied between academic units. One institution had identified a low take-up of courses provided by its central staff development unit and had decided that a strategy was needed to encourage staff to engage with developments in pedagogy and new technology. As part of a wider recommendation on monitoring variability in the operation of quality assurance processes, the report

encouraged the institution to ensure that staff were made more aware of such opportunities and that attendance should be monitored.

Support and development for new full-time academic staff

22   All of the audit reports indicated that institutions had established induction programmes for new staff, and in a few cases features of good practice were identified where these were particularly comprehensive and effective. In one institution, for example, a two-day general induction course was supplemented by a further two-day event at school level, at which mentors were allocated. Subsequently some categories of new staff were required to complete the institution's Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education [University of Gloucestershire, 131]. In another institution, new staff were provided with inductions at both central and local level, while for new and promoted staff, short-term needs were identified by means of an Initial Development Plan and the appointment of a mentor [University of Teesside, 77].

23   Similarly, virtually all institutions had established certificated professional development programmes for new staff, most of which were accredited by the Higher Education Academy (or its predecessor). Frequently, attendance was a requirement for staff with limited or no experience of teaching in higher education. In a few cases these programmes were cited as features of good practice. In one institution, staff spoke highly of mandatory programmes for new staff and postgraduate research students who did not already hold nationally recognised teaching qualifications. There were plans to extend the programmes to provide professional development for other staff [Royal Holloway, University of London, 94 and 98]. In another institution, differentiated programmes were provided for various categories of staff - for example, for those with no teaching qualification or less than three years experience, for those with reduced teaching responsibilities and for teaching staff in partner colleges. The report considered that these were working effectively and that they were a feature of good practice [University of Teesside, 84]. In one case, however, an institution had not provided access for its staff to a certificated programme and was recommended to consider doing so.

Support and development for part-time teachers and graduate teaching assistants

24   One of the features of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 6: Assessment of students* (first published in 2000 and subsequently revised in 2006) is the advisability of making provision for the support and development of all those engaged in teaching and supporting learning, to ensure that they are adequately prepared for their roles.

25   This was one of the areas most commented upon in the institutional audit reports. Many reports identified institutions which had taken an inclusive approach by offering opportunities for development to all staff engaged in teaching and supporting learning. A number of features of good practice were identified. For example, in one institution the report noted with approval the extension of performance review, peer observation and staff development schemes to associate lecturers, who, when they were able to attend, were offered payment [Liverpool Hope

University, 99]. Another institution provided considerable flexibility in delivery, for example through the organisation of staff development at a local level, through handbooks and though various on-line resources, which were thought to be of particular benefit to sessional staff [University of Derby, 136].

26   This area, however, also accounted for the largest number of recommendations. Several institutions were recommended to review their policies and procedures with regard to the training of part-time or visiting staff, especially where arrangements were found to vary across academic units. One audit report noted that, in spite of a number of initiatives, continuing concerns were expressed by students on the quality of teaching provided by, and the language skills of, graduate teaching assistants. The report recommended that in view of the extensive use of part-time staff, the institution consider making training compulsory, including, where appropriate, English for academic purposes, and monitoring performance carefully. In another case, where hourly-paid staff were not included in the normal provisions for staff appointment, induction, appraisal or peer observation, and where support varied between faculties, the report recommended that the institution monitor across programmes the levels of support given to such staff.

27   Other recommendations focused upon the need to provide, monitor or review institutional policies for the use of postgraduate research students in teaching, including arrangements for their training and support. One report recommended the establishment and implementation of an institutional policy on the use of postgraduate students in teaching and assessment, where there was found to be no requirement for such training, and where observation of teaching occurred on an unsystematic basis. Another report found that elements of the preparation of postgraduate students for teaching was provided through the research training programme, with continuing support provided by research supervisors. The report recommended the implementation of 'a policy to ensure that all research students receive full preparatory training before taking up teaching responsibilities'.

Peer observation as a mechanism for assuring and enhancing the quality of teaching

28   In the paper on this subject in the first series of *Outcomes...*, a number of audit reports cited schemes for peer observation or review as features of good practice. No features of good practice identified in this series focus explicitly upon peer observation of teaching, although in a small number of cases such schemes were noted positively in the context of wider staff development arrangements where good practice was found. In one case a staff appraisal system made use of the outcomes of peer observation of teaching and student evaluations [University of Hertfordshire, 82; see also University College London, 64; University of Northumbria at Newcastle, 106; University of Chester, 78].

29   A number of audit reports, however, drew attention to perceived deficiencies in peer observation schemes operated by institutions. In particular, there were two main areas which attracted comment. The first was where significant variations were found in the extent of the implementation of peer observation within institutions, with some individuals and academic units engaging with it while others did not. In a number of

cases audit reports recommended that institutions take steps to ensure that all teaching staff and units engaged with peer observation, and to monitor the consistency with which this was achieved. In one institution where schemes for staff appraisal and for the peer supported review of learning, teaching and assessment were not implemented universally, and where staff were permitted to identify their own peer reviewer, the report recommended a reassessment of these systems to enable them to assure the quality of teaching more effectively. In another institution the report found that peer review was widely regarded as an informal process, was sometimes confused with team teaching, and was not tracked or linked to the development and enhancement of teaching practice. The report recommended that the institution undertake its proposed review of peer observation and provide staff development for reviewers.

30   The second area of comment concerned the dissemination of good practice. It is clear from the audit reports that in order to maintain the trust of participants, peer observation is usually undertaken on a confidential basis. The wider dissemination of good practice identified during the course of observation is a frequently acknowledged difficulty. One report urged the institution to consider how it might 'better achieve collective outcomes from the peer observation process which currently has a confidential element in order to facilitate opportunities for quality enhancement more effectively'. In another institution some academic units focused on team teaching, while in others staff arranged peer observation on an ad hoc basis, and this could not be relied upon to help staff identify good practice. The report recommended that the institution ensure that peer observation operated in a way that retained flexibility, but enabled the dissemination of good practice within and between faculties. In a further case peer observation was not part of the institution's policy for staff development and, where it was used, it was regarded as a check on performance, rather than as a way of identifying good practice. The report encouraged the institution to 'develop processes of peer observation more widely and to reflect upon ways in which they can promote enhancement as well as assurance'.

Performance review/appraisal as a mechanism for eliciting and meeting the developmental needs of academic staff

31   Virtually all institutions have systems for the performance review/appraisal of staff which, at least in theory, should generate information about development needs and inform the planning of staff development activities. One institutional audit report noted that data collected from student evaluations was fed directly into the personal development review and development planning process for staff, via the Student On-Line Evaluation system [Imperial College London, 103 and 112]. Another report found good practice in the 'articulation between the [performance and development review] process and [the] identification of staff development needs'. The outcome of this process was used by the head of school to plan and budget for development activities [University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 110]. A further report, noted in paragraph 28, found that the outcomes of the peer observation of teaching and student evaluations were linked to the staff appraisal process, 'thus providing a direct link with staff development' [University of Hertfordshire, 82].

32   Other audit reports, however, found that the use of appraisal varied across the institution and that as a consequence individual staff development needs were not always articulated or fed into the planning process. One report indicated that the use of the staff appraisal system was variable, and while deans of faculty were responsible for identifying staff development needs, this responsibility was not included in the description of their role. The audit team 'was not convinced that the…procedure assured a consistent approach to monitoring appraisal, or that it provided the head of department with a clear picture of the training needs of the academic staff of the department' and recommended the institution to take steps to 'ensure a more consistent and embedded staff appraisal process'. As well as evidence of the effective use of appraisal in areas where this was fully deployed, another report found variability in implementation and encouraged the institution to review its use and effectiveness to 'ensure the linkages with staff development, and to establish a forum and an action plan' for the dissemination of good practice in appraisal.

The development of staff in partner institutions

33   The *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* (and its predecessor published in 1999) advises institutions to assure themselves that staff in partner institutions are prepared for their roles by making appropriate arrangements for their development and training.

34   The institutional audit reports frequently noted where development opportunities were open to staff in partner institutions. In a few instances, the reports identified features of good practice in this regard, either generally [University of Central England in Birmingham, 91] or in areas including programme review and the use of programme specifications [Goldsmiths College, University of London, 32 and 118]. Reports also noted where access to certificated programmes in teaching and learning was provided to partner staff. In one institution where the accredited programmes for the development of staff were regarded as a feature of good practice, a postgraduate certificate in teaching and learning was made available to staff in partner organisations. Participants were allotted a mentor and were able to take advantage of the full range of staff development opportunities provided [University of Teesside, 84]. In one or two cases, however, reports noted opportunities to improve the development offered to partner staff. For example, one report commented that a specific staff development briefing 'did not appear to be part of a planned programme of developmental opportunities' and recommended the institution consider, with its partners, the provision of an appropriate programme of institutional and staff development.

The role of staff development in disseminating good practice

35   One of the key functions of staff development is to disseminate good practice across institutions. A considerable number of institutional audit reports noted good practice in this area. In one institution, for example, a range of staff development support for enhancement was in place, including National Teaching Fellows, Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning, and funding to stimulate academic development. In addition the pedagogic research conducted by the Centre for

Academic and Professional Development contributed to teaching through the promotion of good practice and innovation, and through varied support for curriculum development [London Metropolitan University, 32-33]. Elsewhere, annual monitoring reports identified where staff development contributed directly to the work of a programme and this allowed the institution's Academic Board to identify areas of successful practice for dissemination [Heythrop College, 102].

The role of peer observation schemes in the dissemination of good practice has been previously discussed in paragraphs 28-30. In addition, the audit reports identified good practice in other methods of dissemination. Online internal journals of teaching and learning, for example, provided a 'flexible means to help staff learn from the experience and good practice of their colleagues' [University of Gloucestershire 60; see also University of Plymouth 108]. Also noted were the organisation of internal teaching and learning conferences [University College London, 65; University of Northumbria, 101; University of Plymouth, 108], handbooks and guides [Queen Mary, University of London, 114; University of Derby, 136; University of Plymouth, 108], and the use of teaching and learning fellowships [Goldsmith's College, University of London, 101; London Metropolitan University, 33; University of Sunderland, 96] or awards [The Queen's University of Belfast, 102; Queen Mary, University of London 115; Imperial College London, 114; University of Hertfordshire, 83].

36 In a few cases, audit reports made recommendations regarding the dissemination of good practice. In one case, where the institution's quality assurance procedures had made an important contribution to enhancement, the report nonetheless found that it was less clear how the institution took note of local initiatives and brought them to wider attention. The report invited the institution to assist staff to identify their own good practice more surely, so that it could be disseminated. In another institution, where staff displayed a varied understanding of the information and support for teaching and learning available to them, the report recommended that a more integrated approach to the dissemination of good practice should be developed.

The findings of this paper compared with its counterpart in the first series of *Outcomes...* papers

37 Like its predecessor, this paper has found that staff development is an area of strength for the higher education sector. The institutional audit reports considered here have identified a large number of features of good practice and a rather smaller number of recommendations. Both papers have found that most institutions have structures and systems appropriate to their needs and an active approach to developing their staff. In both cases, the preparation of part-time and visiting staff, and graduate teaching assistants was found to be mixed. Some differences between the two papers exist, however. In particular, the linkage of staff development approaches with institutional priorities, and the role of staff development in the dissemination of good practice, are perhaps more marked than in the first *Outcomes...* paper, while there are rather fewer examples of good practice focussed particularly on the peer review of teaching in this second paper.

Conclusions

38   Analysis of the institutional audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006 suggests that appropriate policies, procedures and mechanisms for staff support and development are in place virtually across the sector. Beyond this, the reports cite numerous instances of good practice and there are relatively few recommendations for improvement. Areas of strength are identified in alignment of staff development with strategic priorities, the work and impact of central staff or educational development units, and the range and quality of staff development opportunities on offer in many institutions. The role of staff development activities in the dissemination of good practice was also noted positively in a considerable number of reports. Practice was rather more mixed in the integration of part-time and visiting staff, or graduate teaching assistants, and in the operation of peer observation of teaching and appraisal schemes. Overall, however, staff development should been seen as a strength of the higher education sector.

Appendix 1 - The institutional audit reports

Note

In the period covered by these papers a number of institutions underwent a variety of scrutiny procedures for taught degree awarding powers, university title and research degree awarding powers. Reports of the individual scrutiny processes were provided to QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers, and its Board of Directors, and formed the basis for advice to the Privy Council on the applications made by the respective institutions.

In most cases the scrutiny processes also provided information which, in the form of a bespoke report, QAA accepted as the equivalent of an institutional audit report. Only those reports which conform to the general pattern of the institutional audit reports are included in the list below.

2004-05

City University

Cranfield University

University of Hull

University of Leicester

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

University of Nottingham

The Queen's University of Belfast

University of Surrey

University of Ulster

Goldsmiths College, University of London

Queen Mary, University of London

Royal Holloway and Bedford New College (Royal Holloway, University of London)

University of London

University College London

Birkbeck College, University of London

Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine (Imperial College London)

St George's Hospital Medical School

University of Derby

De Montfort University

University of Gloucestershire

University of Hertfordshire

Sheffield Hallam University

University of Huddersfield

Kingston University

London Metropolitan University

Leeds Metropolitan University

Liverpool John Moores University

University of Luton[1]

University of Northumbria at Newcastle

Oxford Brookes University

University of Plymouth

Staffordshire University

London South Bank University

University of Sunderland

University of Teesside

University of East London

University of the West of England, Bristol

University of Westminster

Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College[2]

Canterbury Christ Church University College[3]

University of Chester

Liverpool Hope University

University College Winchester[4]

Henley Management College[5]

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[1] Now the University of Bedfordshire
[2] Now Buckinghamshire New University
[3] Now Canterbury Christ Church University
[4] Now the University of Winchester
[5] Now merged with the University of Reading

2005-06

University of Manchester

Courtauld Institute of Art

Heythrop College

University of London External System

London School of Economics and Political Science

The University of Bolton

Thames Valley University

University of Central England in Birmingham

University of Worcester

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies

Dartington College of Arts

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth

[6] Now Birmingham City University

[7] Now part of the University College Falmouth

Appendix 2 - Reports on specialist institutions

2004-05

Birkbeck College, University of London

Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine (Imperial College London)

St George's Hospital Medical School

Henley Management College

Harper Adams University College

Conservatoire for Dance and Drama

American InterContinental University - London

2005-06

Courtauld Institute of Art

Heythrop College

University of London External System

London School of Economics and Political Science

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies

Dartington College of Arts

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth

Appendix 3 - Titles of Outcomes from institutional audit papers, Series 2

In most cases, *Outcomes...* papers will be no longer than 20 sides of A4. Projected titles of *Outcomes...* papers in the second series are listed below in provisional order of publication.

The first series of papers can be found on QAA's website at www.qaa.ac.uk/enhancement

Titles

Institutions' frameworks for managing quality and academic standards

Progression and completion statistics

Learning support resources (including virtual learning environments)

Assessment of students

Work-based and placement learning, and employability

Programme monitoring arrangements

Arrangements for international students

Institutions' work with employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies

Recruitment and admission of students

External examiners and their reports

Collaborative provision in the institutional audit reports

Institutions' arrangements to support widening participation and access to higher education

Institutions' support for e-learning

Specialist institutions

Student representation and feedback

Academic guidance, support and supervision, and personal support and guidance

Staff support and development arrangements

Subject benchmark statements

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Programme specifications

Arrangements for combined, joint and multidisciplinary honours degrees programmes

The adoption and use of learning outcomes

Validation and approval of new provision, and its periodic review

The self-evaluation document in institutional audit

The contribution of the student written submission to institutional audit

Institutions' intentions for enhancement

Series 2: concluding overview

Appendix 4 - Methodology

The analysis of the institutional audit reports uses the headings set out in Annex H of the *Handbook for institutional audit: England (2002)* to subdivide the summary, main report and findings sections of the institutional audit reports into broad areas. An example from the main report is 'The institution's framework for managing quality and standards, including collaborative provision'.

For each published report, the text is taken from the report published on QAA's website and converted to plain text format. The resulting files are checked for accuracy and coded into sections following the template used to construct the institutional audit reports. In addition, the text of each report is tagged with information providing the date the report was published and some basic characteristics of the institution ('base data'). The reports were then introduced into qualitative research software package, QSR N6®. The software provides a wide range of tools to support indexing and searching and allows features of interest to be coded for further investigation.

An audit team's judgements, its identification of features of good practice, and its recommendations appear at two points in an institutional audit report: the summary and at the end of the findings. It is only in the latter, however, that cross references to the paragraphs in the main report are to be found, and it is here that the grounds for identifying a feature of good practice, offering a recommendation and making a judgement are set out. These cross references have been used to locate features of good practice and recommendations to the particular sections of the report to which they refer.

Individual *Outcomes...* papers are compiled by QAA staff and experienced institutional auditors. To assist in compiling the papers, reports produced by QSR N6® 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.