Outcomes from institutional audit

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

Second series

Sharing good practice

Summary

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) sets out general expectations about the academic standards of higher education awards at various levels. It provides an important reference point for institutions, staff and students in the development of academic awards, and in particular for the development of intended learning outcomes for programmes of study. When used together with subject benchmark statements and programme specifications, the FHEQ helps to provide confidence that the academic standards of awards are comparable with those of other awards at the same level, both in the same and in other institutions. Institutional audit, therefore, takes account of how the FHEQ is used.

Consideration of the audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006 shows that, in general, institutions engaged in a positive manner with the FHEQ. It is clear from the reports that the FHEQ generated considerable thought and debate, and that institutions took the opportunity to revise their award structures in order to bring them into line with national expectations. Good practice was identified where an institution had made extensive use of the FHEQ's qualification level descriptors in developing programme specifications. In other cases, where anomalies remained, or where institutional frameworks were unclear or their implementation delayed, the reports made recommendations.

Links between intended learning outcomes, assessment and the FHEQ were usually set out in programme specifications. While a feature of good practice was found where there was close alignment between intended learning outcomes and the relevant qualification descriptor of the FHEQ, a number of recommendations were also made where intended learning outcomes or assessments were found not to be set at the correct level. Some variability of engagement with the FHEQ at discipline level was identified in the scrutiny of programme specifications. One-third of the audit reports identified one or more programme specifications that made no mention of the FHEQ, and some made recommendations in this regard. Nonetheless the majority of discipline audit trails concluded that intended learning outcomes were pitched at the appropriate level, or that the standard of achievement displayed by students was appropriate to the location of the award on the FHEQ.

Institutions made active efforts to ensure that the guidance of the FHEQ is taken into account in both internal award frameworks, and quality management processes and documentation, especially for programme approval and review. Where there were gaps in institutional documentation, or where consideration of the FHEQ was not evident, the audit reports made recommendations. Engagement with and awareness of the FHEQ was not always as apparent at discipline level as at institutional level. In addition there were a number of recommendations on the need to engage with other reference points in the development of institutions' quality management processes.

For the most part, institutions had mechanisms to ensure that an oversight was taken at institutional level of the application of the FHEQ, and alignment with it, on a periodic or continuing basis.

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 audit reports published between 2003 and November 2004. This paper is based on the findings of institutional audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006.

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 3, 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. So that readers can readily refer to the relevant audit report, the name of the institution used when identifying references is the name that appears on the relevant audit report on QAA's website. For those institutions where a change of name has subsequently taken place, this is noted in Appendix 1 (page 11), and is the correct name at the time of publication of this paper.

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 this second series of *Outcomes...* papers can be found at Appendix 3 (page 15).

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…* papers. 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 11). A note on the methodology used to produce this and other papers in this second *Outcomes...* series can be found at Appendix 4 (page 17).

2   *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) provides generic guidance on the academic standards of higher education awards. It consists of a number of different elements: guidance on the consistent naming of academic awards; a qualifications framework identifying different levels; threshold generic qualifications descriptors for awards at each level; and guidance on implementation arrangements. It is therefore a key reference point for institutions, their staff and students in the development of academic awards and in particular for the development of the intended learning outcomes by which the standards of an award are expressed. When used with the subject benchmark statements, which interpret this advice for honours and some master's degrees in particular discipline areas, this promotes the development of programme learning outcomes to an appropriate standard. Such learning outcomes are expressed in programme specifications published by individual institutions. The use of the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and programme specifications together, therefore helps institutions, departments, students and the public to be confident that the academic standards of higher education awards are comparable with other awards at the same level.

Features of good practice

3   Consideration of the published institutional audit reports shows the following features of good practice relating to institutions' use of the FHEQ:

* the role of the [Educational Development Committee] in supporting and leading developments in teaching and learning, and its work with departments to spread good practice. In particular, the report identified '...a detailed and rigorous appraisal process which aims to lighten the load on the validation panel, enabling it to concentrate on its core considerations of rationale, aims, compliance with College regulations and accordance with subject benchmark statements and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)...' [paragraph 47] [Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, paragraph 215 ii; paragraphs 43, 47, 48 and 99]

* the fully articulated linkage of module-level and award learning outcomes and assessment strategies mapping to external reference points [Staffordshire University, paragraphs 251iii; paragraphs 46, 77 and 84]

* the College's approach to external examiners and their reports [in particular, the report noted that 'the master's level subject benchmark statement in business and management and the FHEQ 'M' level descriptors were used extensively in the development of programme specifications' [paragraph 68] [Henley Management College, paragraph 213 ii; paragraphs 54-69].

4   The number of features of good practice relating to the FHEQ needs to be put into the wider context of the number of audit reports which, while not explicitly identifying features of good practice, nonetheless drew attention to approaches to the FHEQ that are worthy of positive note. These include:

● Cranfield University [paragraphs 45, 67, 116 and 128]

● University of Leicester [paragraphs 78 and 79]

● University of Sunderland [paragraphs 67 and 68].

5   There were recommendations for further action in relation to institutions' use of the FHEQ in 17 audit reports. Both features of good practice and recommendations are explored below and are linked to the themes to which they are most closely related. However, all the reports referred to the FHEQ and the material used in this paper is not restricted to where good practice or recommendations were identified.

The use of the Academic Infrastructure in institutional audit

6   The FHEQ was first published in January 2001, as one of the components of the Academic Infrastructure developed by QAA (the others are: the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*), subject benchmark statements and programme specifications). Institutions have been expected to be able to demonstrate that students commencing their programmes of study with effect from the 2003/04 academic year will gain, on successful completion, qualifications that are awarded in accordance with the FHEQ. It follows that one-year master's degrees awarded since 2004 and three-year undergraduate degrees awarded since 2005-06 should have met the expectations of the FHEQ. Alignment of awards with the FHEQ was therefore an important subject of enquiry in institutional audit.

7   Institutional audit teams were asked to consider the use of the FHEQ in programme approval procedures, and to consider the institution's overall approach to the FHEQ, as part of a wider set of external reference points for quality and standards. Audit teams were asked to use the discipline audit trails to establish whether there were clear links in programme specifications to the FHEQ and to relevant subject benchmark statements. They were also asked to take a view as to whether the standard of student achievement, as demonstrated in samples of assessed work, was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location in the FHEQ. As a result, almost all the audit reports explicitly mentioned the FHEQ in the context of the discipline audit trails, although in many cases the references were largely limited to confirmation that the nature of the assessment and/or the standard of student achievement were indeed appropriate.

8   The individual elements of the Academic Infrastructure are intended to complement each other and it was sometimes difficult to separate comments about how institutions have approached the various elements. This is particularly the case for the FHEQ, the use of which is most commonly evidenced in audit through the scrutiny of programme specifications provided for the discipline audit trails. This paper principally explores those comments that relate specifically (although not necessarily exclusively) to the use of the FHEQ. Readers should also refer to the *Outcomes...* papers in this series on *Subject benchmark statements* and *Programme specifications*.

A revised version of the FHEQ was published in 2008, in which one of the main changes was that qualification levels were identified by numbers, rather than by letters. Compatibility with the *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area* (FQ-EHEA) was verified in the same year. All references to the FHEQ in this paper are taken from the first edition, published in 2001[1].

Themes

9   In the institutional audit reports considered, the major themes relating to the FHEQ are:

- award structures and the location of awards within the FHEQ
- the links between the FHEQ, learning outcomes and assessment
- references to the FHEQ in programme specifications
- the embedding of the FHEQ in quality assurance processes and documentation
- staff awareness of the FHEQ
- institutional oversight of matters relating to the FHEQ.

Award structures and the location of awards within the FHEQ

10   Most institutional audit reports indicated that institutions have been conscientious in relating their internal award structures or frameworks to the FHEQ. Generally, the reports noted that awards were clearly situated at the appropriate level and that credit and qualifications frameworks were suitably aligned. In some cases, modifications to these frameworks had been made and these included: alterations to the requirements for integrated master's programmes (including ensuring sufficient modules at M (Master's) level); changes to ensure that a graduate certificate could be located correctly; the withdrawal of some programmes; and the discontinuation of the award of Pass degrees to students failing at honours level. In addition, use had been made of the FHEQ for the development of sets of descriptors for awards at M and D (Doctoral) levels. Many institutions were found to make use of level descriptors, which were aligned with the levels of the FHEQ.

11   Where particular awards or levels of award were not in alignment with the FHEQ, recommendations were made. In one case, a level in an award framework did not appear in the FHEQ and was intended as compensation for students failing at a higher level. The report identified the need to define positively the intended learning outcomes of awards at this level, in line with the advice of the FHEQ. In another case, postgraduate conversion programmes were called master's degrees even though little of the material was likely to be at M level. The report recommended that the institution review this matter, and ensure that qualification level descriptors were related to intended learning outcomes for all programme levels. In a further example, an institution claimed that a professional vocational certificate fell outside the FHEQ, however, the report recommended that since this was a qualification of the institution, the matter should be given further attention. Finally, concern was

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[1] Available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/fheq/ewni

expressed in one report as to whether the intended learning outcomes of modules in one discipline were set at the appropriate level, and the report recommended that the institution continue its work to ensure that this was the case.

12   Other audit reports identified more general recommendations regarding award structures. In one case, a report noted the absence of evidence as to how the institution had systematically defined its own new awards and benchmarked them against the FHEQ, and while some documentation referred to levels, defined and agreed level descriptors referencing the FHEQ were not seen. The report recommended that the institution review its quality assurance procedures to ensure that full account was taken of the purposes and intentions of the FHEQ. Where an institution used the level descriptors produced by a credit consortium, some confusion between these descriptors and the qualification level descriptors of the FHEQ was evident in documentation, and the institution was recommended to engage with the FHEQ in order to ensure that all awards were correctly located. In other institutions, delays in locating all awards on the FHEQ arose because qualifications frameworks were being redrafted. In one case, the report found that the process of agreeing and adopting a common awards framework had been 'unnecessarily slow', and recommended that the institution expedite its implementation to ensure alignment and consistency in assessment.

The links between the FHEQ, learning outcomes and assessment

13   Many institutional audit reports noted how institutions used the FHEQ in setting and assessing academic standards, especially in aligning intended learning outcomes with qualification level descriptors, and linking assessment tasks to these outcomes. A number of reports noted the establishment and use of generic grading criteria, and one report noted that the establishment of grading criteria for each 10 percentile over the full range and the use of programme specifications had extended the institution's confidence in its position in relation to the FHEQ. Links between the FHEQ, intended learning outcomes and assessment were usually set out in programme specifications. In one case, the linking of module, level and programme learning outcomes, which were fully articulated with the FHEQ, was regarded as a feature of good practice [Staffordshire University, paragraphs 77 and 84]. For the most part, the reports of discipline audit trails found that awards were appropriately located on the FHEQ or that standards of student achievement were appropriate to award titles and their location on the FHEQ.

14   Several audit reports made recommendations regarding the links between the FHEQ and assessment. Three were concerned with levels. In one case, where staff in one programme did not engage directly with the FHEQ, students had commented on the level of difficulty in year two, and the external examiner had commented on performance rates in some modules in the same year. Staff were encouraged to engage more with the FHEQ to assist students 'to progress smoothly between the levels of the programme and to review the content, assessment, guidance and level of difficulty of year two modules' in the light of the FHEQ and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure. In another example, the assessment scheme for an integrated master's programme was not clearly identified at different levels, and there was insufficient differentiation in the learning outcomes set for H (Honours) and M-level

modules. This supported a recommendation that the institution review its programme structures to provide assurance of an organised academic progression through the programme elements. A further report noted that in one school, intended learning outcomes did not articulate well with H-level descriptors and there was 'a lack of consistency in the use of appropriate terminology in the setting of assessments'.

References to the FHEQ in programme specifications

15   Many institutional audit reports noted either directly, or by implication, that institutions provided explicit guidance that the FHEQ should be considered in the construction of programme specifications. Some institutions provided standardised templates to facilitate this. One report, for example, noted that the institution had ensured clear articulation between the FHEQ and programme specifications, which frequently referred to the FHEQ. Another report, for a specialist institution, found evidence that the Master's level subject benchmark statement in Business and Management and the FHEQ M-level descriptors had been used extensively in the development of programme specifications [Henley Management College, paragraph 68]. During the course of the discipline audit trails, many reports noted clear examples of references to the FHEQ or to institutional level descriptors in programme specifications. For the most part, programme specifications clearly expressed level and programme intended learning outcomes, using the language of the qualification descriptors. Alignment was further evidenced by the consideration of module specifications and this demonstrated how subject content and related skills were identified in a progressive manner in accordance with the qualification descriptors in the FHEQ.

16   The discipline audit trails identified some variability of engagement with the FHEQ within institutions. Over one-third of the audit reports made mention of the absence of explicit reference being made to the FHEQ in programme specifications for one or more disciplines considered, although in many of these cases, audit teams were reassured that the FHEQ had indeed been considered, or that the programme in question was operating at the correct level. Nonetheless, a number of reports made critical comments in this area. One report, for example, found that programme specifications for a named subject 'would benefit from more demonstrable statements confirming engagement with the FHEQ, the relevant subject benchmark statement and the mapping of learning outcomes', and this contributed to a wider recommendation to complete the development of distinct programme specifications for all the institution's awards. Other reports made comments where programme specifications were difficult to follow and suggested that there was a need to consider a more standardised approach to avoid confusion over nomenclature or to differentiate clearly between qualification levels. In another case, the report found that some programme specifications and handbooks did not identify programme-level elements in relation to the FHEQ, 'leading to some lack of transparency as to the level of elements making up programmes', and noted the institution's acceptance that more needed to be done to make explicit the relationship between programme outcomes and the FHEQ. The report went on to recommend that the institution 'establish a systematic and consistent approach...to the coding of course elements to clearly designate levels of study'.

17   Many institutions regarded programme specifications as essential components of the documentation for approval and review, and saw other elements of the Academic Infrastructure, including the FHEQ, as important reference points. In one case, however, there was no requirement to include explicit reference to the FHEQ in programme specifications for the purposes of programme approval, although there was the intention to address the matter once the institution's qualifications and credit framework had been finalised. In another case, little direct use of the FHEQ was made in programme development and review, nor were programme specifications systematically checked for consistency by the institution. As a result, the report recommended the institution develop a way to ensure that the learning outcomes in programme specifications were sufficiently distinct and engaged with the FHEQ in order to ensure that all awards were accurately placed. Overall, however, institutions had approached the use of the FHEQ in programme specifications in a positive manner.

The embedding of the FHEQ in quality assurance processes and documentation

18   It is clear from the institutional audit reports that engagement with the FHEQ led to developments within institutions' qualification frameworks and within wider quality assurance processes. One report noted that the institution's reflection on the FHEQ had resulted in minor and more substantial changes, and that evidence was available to confirm consistency between the nomenclature of its awards and the Framework. A more comprehensive impact was noted in another report which quoted the institution's observation that it had adopted the principles of the FHEQ in full and developed 'a comprehensive guide to modular structures, which will be cross-referenced to definitions of levels, and incorporate the [institution's] procedures on programme specifications, accreditation of prior [experiential] learning (AP[E]L), and progression and compensation'.

19   Most audit reports noted that institutional processes for programme approval and external examiners required reference to be made to the FHEQ. Some reports noted explicitly institutional requirements that such processes provide evidence that the level of award in question was appropriately located. Where references to the FHEQ in institutional guidance were considered to be inadequate, recommendations were made. One report noted that guidance on the use of FHEQ in programme design and approval was less comprehensive than that provided on other parts of the Academic Infrastructure, and the institution was recommended to 'clarify and strengthen its published regulatory guidance, particularly with regard to programme validation, so as to include explicit reference to the FHEQ, or to other descriptors of levels and qualifications aligned with the FHEQ'. In another case, an approval template was found to contain no reference to the Academic Infrastructure.

20   The audit reports also commented on a small number of cases where institutional guidance on the use of the FHEQ in programme approval did not appear to have been followed. In one report, it was found that, although a standing validation committee was expected to ensure that new programmes reflected the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure, minutes of meetings did not always refer to the FHEQ or to the subject benchmark statements. The report recommended that the institution consider how it could be assured, through validation and review, that it was discharging its duties with regard to confirming alignment with the Academic Infrastructure.

Another report noted that specific references to the FHEQ did not appear in all validation reports. A further report noted that strong evidence was not seen to indicate that validation processes had confirmed the alignment of some programmes with institutional level descriptors, which were themselves aligned to the FHEQ.

21   There were several recommendations regarding the embedding of the wider Academic Infrastructure in institutions' quality processes. One recommendation identified the need to clarify the locus of responsibility for ensuring consistent engagement with these reference points. In an institution where little use was made of the Academic Infrastructure in relation to programme approval or review, and where there was no formal policy that external advisers should comment on the FHEQ or subject benchmark statements, a number of recommendations were made.

Staff awareness of the FHEQ

22   The institutional audit reports referred to various mechanisms in institutions whereby staff were supported in their engagement with the FHEQ, including the use of quality manuals, documentation on intranets, written guides, and professional development activities. Some reports noted that the understanding and use of the FHEQ was widespread among staff at all levels and that due regard was taken of it in the construction of programmes. This was not the case in all reports, and there were comments, for example, that it was evident that some staff were not familiar with the FHEQ or that staff appeared uncertain of its implications for academic standards. For the most part, institutions' central quality systems demonstrated sufficient awareness of the importance and role of the FHEQ, and the majority of discipline audit trails demonstrated that this awareness was replicated at discipline level. As we have seen, however, familiarity at this level sometimes varied.

Institutional oversight of matters relating to the FHEQ

23   The institutional audit reports confirmed that, in general, an oversight was taken to ensure the use of the FHEQ in quality processes. The main checks used included the reports of programme approval and review panels, annual monitoring reports, external examiners' reports, and assessment boards. These were monitored by various bodies, including learning and teaching committees, faculty boards, quality units, and ultimately academic boards and senates. A number of reports referred to the continuing efforts of institutions to ensure alignment with the FHEQ and the Academic Infrastructure more widely. Some examples included a mapping exercise being updated and checks being systematically drawn together to monitor adherence to external reference points in order to inform an institutional quality and standards profile. There were, however, a small number of instances where oversight was not considered adequate. One report found no clear evidence that alignment with the FHEQ was tested through validation events or through annual monitoring and questioned whether the institution could be certain that all programmes were so aligned. While the report made no recommendation specific to the FHEQ, it did make a number of recommendations on the operation of quality processes more generally.

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

24   The paper on this topic in the first series of *Outcomes...* noted that the publication of the FHEQ had led to widespread reflection by institutions on their internal award structures and that adjustments had been made to these. In particular, the alignment of postgraduate programmes with the FHEQ had posed challenges. Further work was required to develop institutions' level descriptors in order to clarify the status of some awards, to embed consideration of the FHEQ in quality processes and to strengthen staff awareness of the Academic Infrastructure. There are similar findings in this paper. At institutional level, the FHEQ was used to underpin award frameworks and approval and review processes. While there was much evidence of engagement with the FHEQ at discipline level, some variations were also apparent.

Conclusions

25   It is clear from the institutional audit reports that most institutions took care to ensure that the standards of their academic awards met the expectations of the FHEQ. Actions taken included ensuring that: awards were located at the correct levels; reference was made to subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ in programme specifications; links were made between learning outcomes and assessment; use was made of the FHEQ in programme approval and review and alignment was monitored. Guidance on the use of the FHEQ was provided by a range of documentation. Staff at discipline level were found to be knowledgeable about the FHEQ, although knowledge and use at this level sometimes varied. Some institutions were found to be in the process of embedding the FHEQ in their institutional processes and some were recommended to engage more fully with it at institutional or discipline levels.

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[2]

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[3]

Canterbury Christ Church University College[4]

University of Chester

Liverpool Hope University

University College Winchester[5]

Henley Management College[6]

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[2] Now the University of Bedfordshire

[3] Now Buckinghamshire New University

[4] Now Canterbury Christ Church University

[5] Now the University of Winchester

[6] Now merged with the University of Reading

Harper Adams University College

Conservatoire for Dance and Drama

American InterContinental University - London

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[7]

University of Worcester

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies

Dartington College of Arts[8]

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth

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[7] Now Birmingham City University

[8] 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.

Outcomes... papers currently available 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.