



**QAA**

# **Outcomes from institutional audit Subject benchmark statements**



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### Summary

Overall, the institutional audit reports reveal active engagement with subject benchmark statements at both institutional and discipline level. Although there are variations in the nature and levels of engagement, in general the statements are being used effectively in the design and development of programmes and in programme specifications.

Subject benchmark statements are mentioned in all but one of the 70 reports published between 2002 and 2004. Features of good practice which include subject benchmark statements as an external reference point and a component of the Academic Infrastructure are identified in three reports and there are recommendations associated with subject benchmark statements in a further three reports.

The audit reports identify varying degrees of engagement with subject benchmark statements that may reflect either the nature of the institution or the stage in the development of the statements at the time of the audit. It appears from the reports that most institutions prefer to treat the statements as useful points of reference and a stimulus for debate and reflection on academic standards and curriculum content and design, rather than checklists to ensure compliance.

Reports of discipline audit trails provide considerable evidence of the effective and developing use of subject benchmark statements. There can, however, be considerable variations between disciplines in the same institution in the way in which the statements are employed. It appears that there is likely to be more active and informed engagement when members of staff have been involved in the development of the statements. There are many examples in the audit reports of the comprehensive mapping of learning outcomes against subject benchmark statements in programme specifications and of creative responses to the use of the statements in cross or interdisciplinary programmes. There are also some indications that the limited number of master's level (M) statements can cause difficulties.

It is clear from the audit reports that the effective and consistent use of the subject benchmark statements depends on their embedding within quality assurance and enhancement procedures. Incorporation of the statements within programme approval, validation and revalidation processes provides an opportunity for institutions to ensure that the statements have been given appropriate consideration at discipline level and, in the process, to seek external opinions on their use. In several institutions consideration of the use made of subject benchmark statements also takes place during the periodic or institutional review process. External examiners frequently have a role to play in assuring institutions that the aims of programmes are consistent with the subject benchmark statement and that students have demonstrated achievement of the appropriate benchmark standard. It appears, however, that some external examiners do not have the expertise necessary to meet the expectations of institutions with regard to the relationship between standards and subject benchmark statements.

### 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'. One of the ways in which this can be accomplished is through identifying features of good practice across the reports and areas where reports have commonly offered recommendations for improvement.

In due course, QAA intends to produce an extended reflection on institutional audit in the *Learning from audit series*, but since the final institutional audit reports in the present audit cycle were not published until spring 2006, *Learning from institutional audit* is unlikely to be published in the same year. To give institutions and other stakeholders more timely information, QAA has therefore decided to produce a series of short working papers, describing features of good practice and summarising recommendations from the audit reports, to be published under the generic title *Outcomes from institutional audit* (hereafter, *Outcomes...*).

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 Sections 2 and 3 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 those Sections 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 series of *Outcomes...* papers, to be published throughout 2005-06, can be found at Appendix 3 (page 14).

The first series of *Outcomes...* papers is based on the 70 institutional audit reports published by the end of November 2004. The second series will draw on institutional audit reports published following the 2004-05 audits. It is likely that there will be some overlap in topics between the first and second series. Papers in each 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 QAA's website and cited, with acknowledgement.

### Subject benchmark statements: introduction and general overview

1 This paper is based on a detailed consideration of the 70 institutional audit reports published by 5 November 2004 (see Appendix 1, page 11). A note of the methodology used to produce this and other papers in the *Outcomes...* series can be found at Appendix 4 (page 15).

2 Of the published institutional reports, all but one explicitly mention subject benchmark statements, and of these, three reports refer specifically to the awareness of, engagement with and use of, the statements as a feature of good practice. Subject benchmark statements are, however, discussed in greater or lesser detail in a further 66 audit reports, and where it is appropriate to do so, this paper also draws on material from these reports.

### Features of good practice

3 Features of good practice identified in connection with subject benchmark statements include:

- the ways in which the College has drawn carefully upon [QAA's] external reference points, including subject benchmark statements, in reviewing its practices; and the subsequent incorporation of these reference points into its standard quality assurance procedures [Trinity and All Saints College, paragraph 147 iii; paragraphs 44 and 45]
- the University's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure, including subject benchmarks, at institutional and local levels [University of Southampton, paragraph 189 iv; paragraph 58]
- the awareness shown by the staff of [*The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*] and the relevant benchmark statements [Wimbledon School of Art, paragraph 239 i; paragraphs 85 and 86].

4 Although subject benchmark statements are explicitly mentioned as features of good practice in relatively few reports, the consideration given to the statements on publication or, more usually, in the drawing up of programme specifications is noted with approval in several reports, including:

- University of Durham [paragraphs 52, 116, 123 and 148]
- University of Oxford [paragraphs 69 and 169]
- Bournemouth University [paragraph 68].

5 There are recommendations in three reports for action in regard to subject benchmark statements, as part of the Academic Infrastructure. Institutions are recommended to take measures to engage with, learn from and contribute to, the Academic Infrastructure; to make consistent use of the Academic Infrastructure, including subject benchmark statements and to reflect further on the purposes and intentions of the Academic Infrastructure, including subject benchmark statements. In addition, reported comments by institutions in their self-evaluation documents on subject benchmark statements, and comments in the audit reports themselves, particularly in the reports of discipline audit trails, indicate some inconsistency in

the use of the statements at discipline level, sometimes as the result of the lack of appropriate statements, or deficiencies in the monitoring of their application, as part of programme specifications, at institutional level.

6 In view of the difficulty in separating subject benchmark statements from the rest of the Academic Infrastructure, some initial observations may be helpful. As was pointed out in a paper on programme specifications earlier in this series, the individual elements of the Academic Infrastructure were intended to complement each other and it is sometimes difficult to comment on how institutions have approached specific aspects, particularly in the case of subject benchmark statements, programme specifications and the FHEQ where there are intrinsic links. An attempt will be made in this paper to concentrate wherever possible on subject benchmark statements but some of this material may also appear in other *Outcomes...* papers on programme specifications and the FHEQ.

### Themes

7 This part of the paper focuses on themes emerging from references relating to subject benchmark statements in the reports undertaken in 2002-04. These can be grouped into the following broad areas:

- engagement with subject benchmark statements as perceived by institutions and audit teams
- the use of subject benchmark statements at discipline level
- embedding subject benchmark statements within quality assurance and enhancement procedures
- links between subject benchmark statements and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure.

### Engagement with subject benchmark statements as perceived by institutions and audit teams

8 Subject benchmark statements set out expectations in a range of subject areas and provide academic staff and institutions with a point of reference in the design and development of degree programmes and a framework for specifying intended learning outcomes. The statements are also one of a number of external sources of information that can be drawn upon for the purposes of both internal and external review. To date 46 subject benchmark statements have been published at honours level and for three subjects at master's (M) level. QAA is committed to the review of existing subject benchmark statements every five years and to the extension of benchmarking to embrace subjects outside the initial grouping and to involve new discipline areas.

9 The audit reports identify varying degrees of engagement with subject benchmark statements; variations which may reflect either the nature of the institution or the stage in the development of the statements at the time of the audit. Remarks in institutions' self-evaluation documents are referred to in several reports in order to demonstrate the levels of involvement with subject benchmark statements that could range from reluctant compliance to active engagement. Two institutions

are reported to have found subject benchmark statements 'a useful tool' against which to check curriculum coverage, but in some cases too generic to be of much assistance to programme teams; this view was echoed by another institution which had commented that some of the less helpful statements lacked 'subject-specificity'. Another institution had taken the view that subject benchmark statements comprised 'points of reference rather than compliance statements' and that there should be debate and reflection about their provisions, rather than unquestioning conformity. Another had emphasised in its self-evaluation document commitment to employing the statements as reference points rather than as 'compulsory checklists'.

10 Several institutions, small specialist ones in particular, are reported to have stressed in their self-evaluation documents their active involvement in the consultation process that accompanied the development of subject benchmark statements. Others drew the attention of audit teams to the impact of subject benchmark statements in their institutions and provided examples of where consideration of the statements had led to changes in programmes. One planned to include conformity with subject benchmark statements in periodic review and another had required evidence that programmes complied with the relevant statements as part of a major re-approval exercise. Yet another reported that it had taken a 'phased approach' to comparing programme standards with the subject benchmark statements and that it was only following publication of the full set of statements that engagement was required from all programme teams. One audit report noted that the institution had drawn a distinction in its self-evaluation document between the impact of subject benchmark statements on existing programmes and on new programmes submitted for approval; in the latter case there was a requirement that the expectations set out in the statements should be addressed.

11 In some cases, where claims had been made in an institution's self-evaluation document about the impact of, or approach to, subject benchmark statements, audit reports record how the claims had been tested. A description of the subject benchmark statements in one self-evaluation document as 'providing a valuable stimulus for discussions of academic standards and curriculum content and design' was supported by staff who confirmed that, although the subject benchmark statements largely confirmed current practice, they had 'helped harmonise assessment and standards across cognate subjects, and provoked useful discussion and debate'. In most cases audit teams found evidence, usually in the course of the discipline audit trails, to support claims of active engagement with, and extensive use of, the statements. In one case, however, the 'explicit' linking of programme specifications to subject benchmark statements mentioned in the self-evaluation document was found not to be obvious. In another, the audit team found that members of staff were unable to talk effectively about how they had engaged with the statements as part of course validation and revalidation processes, in spite of the claim in the self-evaluation document that 'subject benchmark statements guide the course development process'.

12 Overall the reports indicate that audit teams found evidence that institutions were engaging actively with subject benchmark statements. The phrases used in the reports, such as: 'meeting the expectations of...', 'satisfying the spirit of...', 'addressing conscientiously', 'giving full consideration to...', 'taking full account of...', 'complying

with...!', 'strong awareness of...!', 'mandatory reference to...!', 'creative response to...!', 'within the limits permitted by...!', 'checked against', reflect the views of audit teams on the differing approaches of institutions to engagement with the statements.

### The use of subject benchmark statements at discipline level

13 The reports of the discipline audit trails provide considerable evidence of the effective and developing use of subject benchmark statements. Although lack of familiarity with the statements is rarely noted, several reports comment that there was likely to be more active engagement when staff had been involved in the development of the statements. For example, one audit team heard how the 'additional insight' provided by a member of staff who had contributed to the compilation of the relevant subject benchmark statement had been helpful in formulating programme specifications. In another institution two members of staff had been part of the relevant benchmarking group and this had ensured that the 'intent and substance' of the statement was reflected in the programme specification. It is noted in one audit report that a programme team had been 'proactive' in its use of subject benchmarking and had produced a useful report for the Learning and Teaching Support Network (now the Higher Education Academy) on ways forward in the discipline for subject benchmarking. One audit team, however, found only indirect references to the relevant subject benchmark statements in programme specifications, in spite of the fact that the discipline self-evaluation document had pointed out that two members of staff had participated in the development of the statements.

14 It is clear from the reports on discipline audit trails that engagement with subject benchmark statements can vary between disciplines in the same institution. In one institution there was reported to be clear evidence in one discipline that great care had been taken to relate programme learning outcomes to the subject benchmark statement, while there was no mention of the subject benchmark statement in the programme specifications for another discipline, although staff had expressed the view that they had no problem in showing that the specifications conformed to the statement. In another institution the audit team found no explicit reference to the subject benchmark statement in the programme specifications in one discipline, while, in another school, 'upholding the guiding assumptions' of the subject benchmark statement was the first key objective of the school's learning and teaching strategy and the care with which the statement was related to the learning outcomes was noted in the report of the discipline audit trail. A wide range of responses was reported in one institution: in one discipline audit trail the programme was found to 'exceed the expectations' of the relevant statement; another 'reflected the intentions' of the statement; in another the draft programme specifications did not make it explicit that each of the core domains identified in the statement was both taught and assessed; in another the programme specifications made full use of the relevant statement and also met the requirements of professional bodies.

15 Several reports of discipline audit trails indicate that learning outcomes had been mapped against the relevant subject benchmark statements. This process is described variously as 'clear and appropriate', 'comprehensive', 'explicit', 'closely mirroring', and 'careful'. In some cases, however, the audit reports recommend more comprehensive identification and explicit mapping of subject benchmark statements in programme specifications or more detailed attention to particular benchmark standards.



16 In the course of the discipline audit trails, some divergences from, and local modifications of, the subject benchmark statements are noted. In some cases the subject benchmark statement itself is recognised as allowing 'significant scope for interpretation'; in others 'minor modifications and appropriate shifts of emphasis' have been required to make the statements more subject-specific. One self-evaluation document had justified a 'gradualist' approach to subject benchmark statements on the grounds that the interdisciplinary nature of many of the institution's programmes meant that few fitted precisely into the QAA's framework for subject benchmark statements. In cases where there was no appropriate statement, or where programmes straddled disciplines, some creative solutions are noted in several audit reports. One discipline self-evaluation document had explained that, as there was no subject benchmark statement for the discipline, use had been made of three related statements in drawing up programme specifications. Another audit team was impressed by the 'sophisticated analyses' brought to bear in defining learning outcomes for a course where there was no subject benchmark statement. There is recognition in the audit reports that the problems of following subject benchmark statements in multidisciplinary topics can be exacerbated in the case of joint degrees.

17 Several audit reports note the difficulties caused by the lack of subject benchmark statements at master's level. One self-evaluation document had referred to the institution's 'proactive involvement' in developing postgraduate subject-specific criteria, in the absence of external benchmarks for its own specialisms, while another had expressed confidence that its methods of programme design and review 'incorporate the spirit of subject benchmarking', although it considered itself hampered by the fact that none of the published statements were directly applicable to its M level taught programmes. Some audit reports note that, in the absence of M level statements, institutions had either followed the level descriptors in the FHEQ or extrapolated beyond the honours level subject benchmark statements. Difficulties were reported in the course of one discipline audit trail even where an M level statement existed, as it was not thought to be 'entirely applicable' to one of the programmes covered.

### **Embedding subject benchmark statements within quality assurance and enhancement procedures**

18 A variety of ways of avoiding the inconsistent use of subject benchmark statements noted in the reports of discipline audit trails are referred to in the audit reports. In one institution programme specifications make specific reference to the checking at faculty level of alignment with subject benchmark statements and, in another, faculties are required to ensure that departments use the statements as reference points in the development of programme specifications. One audit report notes that as part of the annual monitoring process schools are required to demonstrate that they have taken into account the relevant subject benchmark statements in the design, monitoring and review of their programmes. In some institutions, the Academic Board, or its equivalent, maintains a general overview of the response to, and impact of, subject benchmark statements. Other institutions provide staff with detailed guidance on external reference points and their implementation or require student handbooks to include references to how learning outcomes relate to subject benchmark statements.

## Outcomes from institutional audit

19 It is clear from the audit reports, however, that effective use of the subject benchmark statements depends on their embedding within quality assurance and enhancement procedures. In the case of an institution where the use of external reference points was identified as a feature of good practice the audit report noted that the institution had taken ownership of subject benchmark statements at all levels, embedding them within institutional and discipline practices [Trinity and All Saints College, paragraph 42]. In another it was reported that the methods used to verify alignment with subject benchmark statements included the use of internal periodic review, validation and revalidation events, and certification by faculty boards as part of the annual monitoring process.

20 Programme approval, validation and revalidation processes provide an opportunity to ensure that subject benchmark statements have been given appropriate consideration. Several audit reports note either that guidelines on the preparation of programmes for approval require evidence that the relevant statements have been taken into account or that new programme pro forma require statements of alignment with the subject benchmark statement. In some institutions validation panels are 'equipped with the relevant subject benchmark statement[s]' and required to consider how proposals take account of them. Some audit reports mention that external members of validation panels are chosen for their particular expertise in the development of subject benchmark statements; others note that external subject specialists are asked to comment on the programme's alignment to the appropriate subject benchmark statement or to evaluate proposals against external reference points such as subject benchmark statements.

21 Several of the audit reports note that the consideration of subject benchmark statements is frequently included in new or revised periodic review processes. In one institution, reviews are expected to include comparison of subjects with relevant subject benchmark statements; in another the mapping between the programmes under review and any appropriate subject benchmark statements form part of the agenda for reviews; and in another the self-evaluation document prepared for the review includes a statement on the relationship of the provision to subject benchmark statements. It is noted in one report that the periodic review process had provided the impetus for the revision of module descriptions to include explicit mapping against appropriate subject benchmark statements. One institution drew attention in its self-evaluation document to the fact that subject benchmark statements received considerable attention and were used extensively in the preparations for institutional review by its validating institution.

22 External examiners appear in several audit reports as playing a part in the embedding of subject benchmark statements. External examiners are required to certify that the programmes that they cover are 'of a standard defined by the benchmarks', to confirm that the aims of the programme are consistent with the subject benchmark statements, to comment on the standards of awards with reference to subject benchmark statements, or to comment on whether students 'have demonstrated achievement of the appropriate benchmark standard'. It was noted in one report that asking external examiners to confirm that the content and structure of programmes 'conformed to the relevant subject benchmarks' could not provide the institution with sufficient assurance that all its programmes had learning

outcomes that had been considered in relation to subject benchmark statements, since the statements dealt with learning outcomes associated with particular discipline areas, rather than actual programme content and structure. It appears from some of the audit reports that the expectations of institutions in relation to reports by external examiners on the link between standards and subject benchmark statements have not always been fulfilled and one institution was encouraged to clarify its expectations in respect of the knowledge base of its external examiners and provide further guidance on subject benchmark statements.

### **Links between subject benchmark statements and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure**

23 As has been observed earlier in this paper there are intrinsic links between subject benchmark statements and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure, in particular to programme specifications and, to a lesser extent, the FHEQ. As a result there are frequent references to subject benchmark statements in the section of the Main report that describes and analyses how institutions work with 'external reference points'. Several audit reports note statements made by institutions under this heading on the nature and extent of engagement with the subject benchmark statements and their impact on quality assurance procedures and explain how these statements were tested in discussions with staff or in the course of discipline audit trails.

24 Inadequate engagement with subject benchmark statements as a component of the Academic Infrastructure occurs very rarely in the audit reports. In most reports the audit teams were able to confirm 'thorough and appropriate engagement', 'clear and effective use', and 'understanding and widespread use'. Several reports note that consideration of external reference points and subject benchmark statements in particular had resulted in changes to the institution's quality assurance procedures. In the case of one institution whose use of external reference points was identified as a feature of good practice, the report noted that the institution had drawn carefully upon the external reference points, including subject benchmark statements, and embedded them into routine quality assurance procedures [Trinity and All Saints College, paragraphs 44 and 45].

25 Subject benchmark statements are rarely linked explicitly in the audit reports with the FHEQ, except where, in the absence of appropriate statements, particularly at M level, the use of level descriptors is recorded. The link with programme specifications is, however, very close. One audit report noted that the institution had been 'commendably prompt' in including reference to the subject benchmark statement in a programme specification. In the course of a discipline audit trail in another institution the audit team was told that the production of programme specifications had led the department 'to identify the close fit between their provision and the subject benchmarks for the first time'. In some institutions the subject benchmark statements had quickly become required reference points in the formulation of programme specifications; programme specifications were required to incorporate a benchmarking analysis or to present other evidence of alignment. One audit team found that, whereas some of the programme specifications it consulted included specific references to the relevant subject benchmark statements, other departments had included a more general statement that the appropriate subject

benchmark statements had been taken into account during the design or review of the programme. In some cases, even where programme specifications contained no explicit reference to subject benchmark statements, audit teams were able to come to the conclusion that the statements had informed the design of programmes or that the programmes specifications reflected 'the intent and substance' of the statements.

### Conclusion

26 This paper has drawn on material found primarily in the section of the main audit report which describes and analyses how institutions work with external reference points, including the Academic Infrastructure, of which subject benchmark statements are one of the component parts. The additional material found in the reports of discipline audit trails has revealed some variations both within and between institutions in the use of subject benchmark statements in programme design and development and in the specification of learning outcomes. These variations may reflect the size and nature of the institutions and/or the stage in the development of the statements at the time of the audit.

27 Subject benchmark statements are closely linked in the reports with the other components of the Academic Infrastructure and, in particular, with programme specifications. As with programme specifications, subject benchmark statements have a developmental character and their adoption and use across institutions is a developing process. Overall, however, the reports reveal a willingness to engage actively with subject benchmark statements both at institutional and discipline level.

## **Appendix 1 - The institutional audit reports**

### **2002-03**

University College Chichester, February 2003  
The Royal Veterinary College, February 2003  
Cumbria Institute of the Arts, March 2003  
Institute of Education, University of London, March 2003  
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, March 2003  
Middlesex University, March 2003  
Royal Academy of Music, March 2003  
Royal College of Art, March 2003  
University of Cambridge, April 2003  
School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, April 2003  
Bath Spa University College, May 2003  
University of Lincoln, May 2003  
London Business School, May 2003  
Newman College of Higher Education, May 2003  
Norwich School of Art and Design, May 2003  
Rose Bruford College, May 2003  
Royal College of Music, May 2003  
Royal Northern College of Music, May 2003  
The School of Pharmacy, University of London, May 2003  
College of St Mark and St John, May 2003  
The Surrey Institute of Art & Design, University College, May 2003  
Trinity and All Saints College, May 2003  
Trinity College of Music, May 2003  
Royal College of Nursing Institute, July 2003

### **2003-04**

University of Bath, October 2003  
University of Bradford, November 2003  
University of Buckingham, November 2003  
University of Essex, November 2003  
University of Exeter, November 2003  
University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, November 2003  
University of Sheffield, November 2003  
Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, December 2003  
Royal Agricultural College, December 2003  
University of Southampton, December 2003  
St Martin's College, Lancaster, December 2003

University of Surrey, Roehampton, December 2003  
University of York, December 2003  
University of East Anglia, January 2004  
University of Durham, February 2004  
University of Liverpool, February 2004  
Writtle College, February 2004  
Bournemouth University, March 2004  
The Institute of Cancer Research, March 2004  
University of Kent, March 2004  
University of Leeds, March 2004  
Loughborough University, March 2004  
Open University, March 2004  
University of Oxford, March 2004  
University of Salford, March 2004  
University of Warwick, March 2004  
University of Wolverhampton, March 2004  
Aston University, April 2004  
University of Birmingham, April 2004  
University of Bristol, April 2004  
University of Central Lancashire, April 2004  
Coventry University, April 2004  
The London Institute, April 2004  
University of Portsmouth, April 2004  
Anglia Polytechnic University, May 2004  
University of Brighton, May 2004  
Brunel University, May 2004  
University of Keele, May 2004  
The Nottingham Trent University, May 2004  
University of Reading, May 2004  
University of Sussex, May 2004  
Wimbledon School of Art, May 2004  
University of Greenwich, June 2004  
King's College London, June 2004  
University of Lancaster, June 2004  
The Manchester Metropolitan University, June 2004

**Appendix 2 - Reports on specialist institutions**

The Royal Veterinary College, February 2003  
Cumbria Institute of the Arts, March 2003  
Institute of Education, University of London, March 2003  
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, March 2003  
Royal Academy of Music, March 2003  
Royal College of Art, March 2003  
School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, April 2003  
London Business School, May 2003  
Newman College of Higher Education, May 2003  
Norwich School of Art and Design, May 2003  
Rose Bruford College, May 2003  
Royal College of Music, May 2003  
Royal Northern College of Music, May 2003  
The School of Pharmacy, University of London, May 2003  
The Surrey Institute of Art & Design, University College, May 2003  
Trinity and All Saints College, May 2003  
Trinity College of Music, May 2003  
Royal College of Nursing Institute, July 2003  
Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, December 2003  
Royal Agricultural College, December 2003  
Writtle College, February 2004  
The Institute of Cancer Research, March 2004  
The London Institute, April 2004  
Wimbledon School of Art, May 2004

### Appendix 3 - Projected titles of *Outcomes...* papers

In most cases, *Outcomes...* papers will be no longer than 15 sides of A4. QAA retains copyright in the *Outcomes...* papers, but as noted earlier, they may be freely used, with acknowledgement.

Projected titles of *Outcomes...* papers in the first series are listed below.

Title	Publishing date (provisional)
Initial overview	April 2005
External examiners and their reports	April 2005
Programme specifications	April 2005
Staff support and development arrangements	October 2005
Student representation and feedback	November 2005
Programme monitoring arrangements	January 2006
Assessment of students	January 2006
Learning support resources (including VLEs)	January 2006
Validation, approval and periodic review	January 2006
Work-based and placement learning, and employability	March 2006
Arrangements for international students	March 2006
Progression and completion statistics	March 2006
Collaborative provision in the institutional audit reports	March 2006
Specialist institutions	July 2006
The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland	July 2006
Subject benchmark statements	September 2006
Academic and personal advice, guidance and supervision	tbc
Institutions' arrangements for the management of quality and academic standards	tbc
Institutions' work with employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies	tbc
Learning outcomes	tbc
Combined honours, joint honours and multidisciplinary programmes	tbc



## Appendix 4 - Methodology

The methodology followed in analysing the institutional audit reports uses the headings set out in Annex H of the *Handbook for institutional audit: England* 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 was taken from the documents published on QAA's website and converted to plain text format. The resulting files were checked for accuracy and coded into sections following the template used to construct the institutional audit reports. In addition, the text of each report was 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 a qualitative research software package, QSR N6<sup>®</sup>. 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 papers in the *Outcomes...* series are compiled by QAA staff and experienced institutional auditors. To assist in compiling the papers, reports produced by QSR N6<sup>®</sup> have been made available 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.

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