QAA

Outcomes from institutional audit
Institutions' frameworks for managing quality and academic standards

Summary

Overall, the 70 institutional audit reports published by November 2004 found that
institutions' frameworks for managing quality and academic standards were sound.
In a number of cases, however, reports described frameworks which were new, or
redesigned, and largely untested. This made reaching a judgement on their likely
future effectiveness more difficult and in such cases, when coming to a view, reports
often referred to the effectiveness of the preceding framework used by the institution
and the quality of its reflections on its own processes and their development.

Features of good practice were cited in 31 of the first 70 audit reports. Strengths
were identified in such areas as documentary guidance on quality assurance and
assessment procedures; the role of administrative and academic bodies and officers
in dissemination of institutional quality assurance policies and procedures; academic
and committee structures and restructuring; oversight of assessment processes,
research degree provision or collaborative provision; and development and operation
of internal audit systems.

Recommendations about institutional frameworks for quality and standards, and the
institutional overview provided by them, featured in a substantial number of the
published reports. Concerns clustered around matters such as: the overall quality
management strategy; linkage and communication between the centre and
departments; committee structures; the distribution and exercise of responsibilities;
parity of student experience across institutions; departmental and school
responsiveness to central policy initiatives; documentation including handbooks on
quality assurance procedures; oversight of collaborative provision; and institutional
responses to the Academic Infrastructure.

Institutional frameworks are generally devised to marry central regulatory and
monitoring oversight with local exercise of primary responsibility for quality and
standards. The audit reports note many instances where the quality of the linkage
between the centre of the institution and faculties, schools and departments is a vital
factor in success. A number of reports identify good practice in strategies adopted by
institutions to ensure effective cohesion between central and local responsibilities and
local embedding of centrally derived initiatives. In other cases, however, concerns
were explicitly linked in the audit reports with arrangements in which significant
responsibility had been delegated from the centre to faculties, schools or
departments, or where departments had preserved much of their autonomy.

Where audit reports identify complex committee structures, they tend to comment
on the costs (and risks) attendant on duplication and lack of transparency in
committees' responsibilities. Some reports found explicit and effective harmonisation
of deliberative and executive functions, although a number of reports also
commented on the disproportionate responsibilities carried in quality management
by a small core of (generally) senior staff, and on the tendency for the responsibilities
to blur in this area between the deliberative and executive arms of institutions.

With regard to assessment, reports endorsed institutional initiatives to unify
institutional practices and enhance parity of treatment for students. Numerous
instances were, however, cited of continuing inconsistencies and variances linked
by reports with potential or actual inequalities in assessment outcomes.

Reports commented widely both on the mechanics and the effectiveness of central guidance and communication. Many reports attributed good practice in the management of quality and standards to the provision of sound institutional handbooks as well as to administrative support centrally and locally. Lack of the requisite linkage between the centre and departments was associated in some cases with difficulties in interpreting and implementing institutional policy.

A number of reports noted the articulation of institutional quality and academic standards systems with the Academic Infrastructure, and their continuous adjustment in the light of revisions to sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic standards and quality in higher education (*the *Code of practice)*. Some reports noted the benefits deriving from the alignment of internal systems with advice offered by the *Code of practice*, for example in the area of assessment.

Within this particular section of the institutional audit reports, consideration of collaborative provision was mostly limited to descriptive aspects of the quality management systems in place, analysis and judgement being reserved for the section later which is dedicated to collaborative provision.

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 will not be published until spring 2006, *Learning from institutional audit* is unlikely to be published before 2007. 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 6, the first paragraph 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 for 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 28).

This 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, and 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 the QAA website and cited, with acknowledgement.

Part I

Institutions' frameworks for managing quality and standards: introduction and general overview

1   This paper is based on a review of the outcomes of the first 70 institutional audits published by 5 November 2004 (see Appendix 1, pages 25-26). A note on the methodology used to produce this and other papers in the *Outcomes…* series can be found in Appendix 4 (page 29).

2   The *Handbook for institutional audit: England* describes audit inquiries as falling into three main areas, of which one is to establish and analyse:

'the effectiveness of an institution's internal quality assurance structures and mechanisms, in the light of the…*Code of practice*, and the way in which the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards are regularly reviewed and the resulting recommendations implemented' [*Handbook*, paragraph 11, page 3].

3   The second area for inquiry is to establish the accuracy, completeness and reliability of the information that an institution publishes about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards. The third area is the consideration of:

'several examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work at the level of the programme...or across the institution as a whole...in order to demonstrate the validity and reliability of the information being generated by [the institution's] internal processes' [*Handbook*, paragraph 11, page 3].

4   This paper focuses on institutions' frameworks for managing quality and the academic standards of awards as seen through the first 70 institutional audit reports. Consideration of the published reports shows several different approaches to addressing the prompts provided by QAA to its audit teams, which invite them to report on the following:

- the institution's committee and executive structures; how authority is distributed between centre and faculties/departments; how procedures are documented and whether there is something equivalent to a handbook or manual

- the institution's framework for managing the academic standards of awards, including student assessment and how that is documented; the use made of the *Code of practice*

- the institution's approach to managing the collaborative provision with which it is associated.

QAA's prompts also invite audit teams to provide a clear indication as to whether the framework the institution has adopted enables it to manage quality and academic standards in a manner appropriate to its responsibilities.

5   Lastly, this particular section of the audit report provides an overview of the institution's quality and academic standards management arrangements. Necessarily, therefore, there is a tendency for the analytical material the section contains to be

wide ranging, and for the analysis and synthesis it contains to refer to matters dealt with in greater detail elsewhere in the report, where evidence can be more properly located. This is particularly the case where such evidence is derived from inquiries undertaken in the course of the discipline audit trails. They provide helpful information on many matters, especially those where conversations with staff and students at programme level provide insights into how institutional strategies and policies are given effect at operational level. For these reasons, this *Outcomes…* paper is both longer and more wide-ranging than most others in the series.

Features of good practice

6   Consideration of the institutional audit reports published by November 2004 shows the following features of good practice relating to institutional frameworks for managing quality and standards:

Relations between the centre and other parts of the institution:

- the frankness, depth and quality of debate in the University which draws appropriately upon the different faculty viewpoints and experience as evidenced in the minutes of the University's committee meetings [University of Bristol, paragraph 288 iii; paragraph 42]

- the series of networks within and across formal structures which contribute to the development of ideas and the exchange of good practice [Brunel University, paragraph 216 i; paragraph 35]

- the way that the University monitors the security of its academic standards through the [Results Ratification and Awards Classification Panel] [Open University, paragraph 207 i; paragraphs 38 and 41]

- the successful implementation of radical governance reforms to create a coherent structure for the management and provision of teaching across the collegiate University [University of Oxford, paragraph 247 i; paragraph 30]

- the extent to which effective overall procedures for managing quality and standards have been embedded throughout the University [University of Southampton, paragraph 189 i; paragraphs 29-31]

- the development of inclusive cross-institutional roles, reflected in the [Quality Assurance Enhancement Group], that enable staff with a wide range and level of experience to engage in quality and standards matters [Bournemouth University, paragraph 239 i; paragraph 28]

- interlinking of structures and processes that generally promote consistency of practice and facilitate enhancement [University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 295; paragraph 32].

How the introduction of new quality and academic standards frameworks has been managed:

- the effective operation of schools within the new organisational structure [Institute of Education, University of London, paragraph 159; paragraph 23]

- the effectiveness and inclusiveness of the new management and committee structure [Norwich School of Art and Design, paragraph 154 ii; paragraphs 29 and 30]

- the University's approach to managing and implementing the current restructuring of the University [University of Southampton, paragraph 189 iii; paragraph 36]

- the University's careful and insightful approach towards its radical review and reorganisation [University of Sussex, paragraph 259 i; paragraph 39]

- the development of new roles, and organisational structures, which assist quality assurance and enhancement and the security of standards within the University [University of Portsmouth, paragraph 258 i; paragraphs 34, 35 and 37]

- the management of progress towards a common programme structure [King's College London, paragraph 269 ii; paragraph 38].

Administrative and deliberative support for the management of quality and academic standards:

- the quality of the administrative support provided for quality and standards matters [Bath Spa University College, paragraph 179 i; paragraph 25]

- the work of the Plenary Group of [Faculty Quality Assurance Team] Chairs in identifying opportunities for enhancement and matters for further consideration at taught programme level [University of Bristol, paragraph 288 i; paragraph 32]

- the collegial relationship between the [Teaching Support Unit] and the senior management and the academic staff of the University, which contributes to the effectiveness of the Unit's work in offering guidance to academic departments for the development and implementation of systems for the assurance of quality and standards [University of Bristol, paragraph 288 ii; paragraph 42]

- the work of the [Teaching and Learning Committee] as an engine of change in promoting a proactive and reflective culture in its work [University of Durham, paragraph 212 bullet point 1; paragraphs 24-27 and 29-32]

- the diligence with which the [Associate Deans (Teaching)] discharge their considerable responsibilities [Loughborough University, paragraph 317 ii; paragraph 34]

- the use of directors of teaching and learning at faculty and school level [University of Reading, paragraph 187 ii; paragraph 21]

- the establishment of the [Academic Audit Committee] and the work it has undertaken [University of Salford, paragraph 208 i; paragraph 20]

- the contributions to the University's quality and academic standards management arrangements of the [Assistant Faculty Officers], their constructive interactions with each other, and their dialogues with the Registry [University of Brighton, paragraph 255 ii; paragraph 27]

- the operation of the [Centre for the Development of Learning and Teaching], including the role of the faculty [Learning, Teaching and Assessment Co-ordinators] and the support they provide to colleagues [St Martin's College, Lancaster, paragraph 217 i; paragraph 28]

- the pervasiveness and impact of the work of the [Quality Assurance and Standards Unit] [St Martin's College, Lancaster, paragraph 217 iii; paragraph 32]

- the role of [the Quality Co-ordinators' Group] in providing a forum to identify and disseminate good practice across colleges [The London Institute, paragraph 242 i; paragraph 37].

Support for students, including research students:

- the strategy for the operation of research degrees which are well integrated into the [Royal College of Nursing Institute] provision, through an established research community of staff and students [Royal College of Nursing Institute, paragraph 158 ii; paragraph 29]

- the College's focus on students, and the attention that it gives to students' views [Rose Bruford College, paragraph 150 i; paragraph 32]

- the School's procedures for monitoring and supporting the experience of students undertaking research degrees [London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, paragraph 134 i; paragraph 23]

- the developmental use of the departmental contacts from the [University Teaching Committee] who facilitate the knowledge and ownership at departmental level of institutional policies and procedures and the exchange of good practice across the University [University of York, paragraph 198 i; paragraph 27].

Documentation and electronic support arrangements:

- the rigorous and well-written documentation in support of the management of quality and standards [University of Durham, paragraph 212, bullet 2; paragraph 32]

- the quality, utility and accessibility of the University's Quality Assurance Handbook [University of Southampton, paragraph 189 ii; paragraph 33]

- the quality and comprehensive nature of documented guidance available to staff to support understanding and implementation of frameworks and policies [Bournemouth University, paragraph 239 iii; paragraph 30]

- the recently published Guidelines for Good Assessment Practice [St Martin's College, Lancaster, paragraph 217 ii; paragraph 30]

- the considerable progress made by the School in the development, documentation and implementation of a range of HR policies and procedures; the production of the Quality Procedures Handbook and staff briefing document on the Academic Infrastructure, published by QAA; and the awareness displayed by staff of [*The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)] and the relevant subject benchmark statements [Wimbledon School of Art, paragraph 239 i; paragraphs 28 and 31]

- the use of Staffnet in the establishment, maintenance and development of policies and procedures for quality assurance and enhancement which fosters consistency of approach across the College [Writtle College, paragraph 182 i; paragraph 22]

- the comprehensive and regularly updated guide to policies and procedures provided for Chairs of Boards of Studies [University of York, paragraph 198 ii; paragraph 28]

- the establishment of the Policy Zone as a single, openly accessible location for information on College policies and processes [King's College London, paragraph 269 i; paragraph 35]

- the quality assurance procedures and regulatory statements contained in a suite of documents that are clear and thorough [University of Brighton, paragraph 255 i; paragraph 25]

- the comprehensive Course Developer's Guide that has had a positive impact on the development of consistent practice [University of Central Lancashire, paragraph 198 ii; paragraph 27]

- the benefits of a clear and comprehensive [Quality Assurance Manual] in ensuring consistency of implementation of procedures [The Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraph 202 ii; paragraph 31].

Assessment arrangements:

- the College-wide development of procedures for group assessment [Trinity College of Music, paragraph 153 i; paragraph 30].

Collaborative arrangements:

- the approach to the collaborative arrangement with the [National Film and Television School], in particular, the operation of the validation process and the articulation and implementation of assessment criteria, linked to learning outcomes, across the range of programmes of study which enable the delivery of clear formative guidance and summative assessment to students [Royal College of Art, paragraph 156 i; paragraph 32]

- the extent of consultation and discussion with staff and students as part of the process towards changing validation partner [Newman College of Higher Education, paragraph 210 i; paragraph 39].

Miscellaneous:

- the achievement of a careful balance between teaching and research activities [University of Oxford, paragraph 247 ii; paragraph 31]

- the effectiveness with which the University develops and facilitates networks to take forward developments in a collegial manner [Bournemouth University, paragraph 239 ii; paragraph 28]

- the establishment of a clear linkage between monitoring and planning as a way of informing the Institute's priorities [The London Institute, paragraph 242 ii; paragraph 41]

- staff engagement with, and ownership of, the procedures for assuring quality and academic standards [St Martin's College, Lancaster, paragraph 217 iv; paragraph 32].

Part II

How the main part of this paper is structured

7   Institutional audit reports identify a group of overlapping themes or factors which determine the adequacy or otherwise of institutional frameworks for managing quality and academic standards. These factors/themes include:

- the centre's links with and overview of local operations
- local ownership of policy and procedure
- the clarity and appropriateness of responsibilities
- the effectiveness of committee structures
- consistency and parity in student experience
- externality and external reference points, and
- development and evaluation of quality management systems.

8   The sections which follow in this paper make some separation of the above themes while reflecting their connections. Hence, they address:

- strategic approaches to the management of quality and standards, further subdivided to cover:

  - the importance of vertical links

  - networking arrangements and intitiatives

  - cross-representation on commitees and groups to ease communication

- structures and responsibilities, further subdivided to cover:

  - deliberative and executive responsibilities

- managing academic standards
- guidance and communication
- externality
- collaborative provision
- institutional overview and evaluation.

Strategic approaches to the management of quality and standards

9   A common starting point for audit reports in considering institutional frameworks is the relationship between central and local roles and responsibilities. This is evidently key to institutions' development and evaluation of quality assurance systems. Reports show that frameworks are generally devised to marry central regulatory and monitoring oversight with local exercise of primary responsibility for quality and standards. In this context, many institutions have delegated (or are engaged in delegating) authority for conducting particular aspects of quality management from the centre to faculties, schools and departments. At the same time some reports make it clear that, for the relevant institutions, 'primary responsibility for quality and standards has always resided in academic departments'.

10   The delicate balance between 'central control' and 'departmental autonomy', and the importance, therefore, of the quality of linkages in either direction, are widely recognised in several self-evaluation documents (SEDs) and noted in the relevant audit reports. Several of the latter observe that institutional arrangements which allow flexible approaches to quality management, across schools and departments, create scope for inconsistencies in practice which may give rise to inequalities in student experience. On the other hand, and sometimes in the same contexts, delegation has been found to assist embedding and local ownership of quality management processes.

The importance of vertical links

11   Many institutional audit reports describe the structural reorganisation of institutions since the previous round of audits which, in many cases, has involved quality management arrangements. In some cases this has been in response to recommendations in earlier rounds of audit for greater central control of quality assurance processes, better harmonisation and embedding of practices and greater accountability.

12   At the same time, many institutional audit reports note the increased employment of quality assurance committees, or other formal groupings, within faculties and/or schools, which may mirror those at institutional level [Institute of Education, University of London, paragraphs 23 and 159]. Sometimes such committees report directly to the institutional committee overseeing quality assurance, while carrying devolved responsibilities for areas such as programme approval, monitoring and review; external examiner nominations or appointments; management of assessment; or maintenance of links with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.

13   In one case a specialist institution had transferred responsibility for 'the operational management of quality' from departments to the centre, with a view to ensuring collective ownership of its provision and awards. In this case the SED acknowledged that the transfer of responsibility was 'still partial' and that tensions remained between departmental executive judgements and the 'recommendations' of committees within the deliberative structure.

14   Effective development and operation of institutional frameworks are featured in a range of audit reports. One institution's refinement of its framework to improve cohesion between central and local responsibilities in a 'devolved model' was recognised as good practice [University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 32]. Another institution's comprehensive review of its framework was addressed to locating responsibility for and ownership of quality assurance and enhancement 'closer to the point of delivery'. In this instance, in devolving greater authority to schools and departments, the institution had maintained responsibility, through its central committees, for 'corporate policy and strategy, monitoring the performance of schools, and reviewing the outcomes of quality assurance processes', the schools having a similar overseeing role vis-à-vis departments. The audit report noted the understanding of the new framework and its espousal by staff who met the audit team, and their commitment to its objectives [University of Sussex, paragraph 39].

15   In another case, the relevant institution expressed a comparable view of the benefits of delegation 'within institutionally agreed frameworks'. Acknowledging the 'challenges' posed to consistency and accountability by delegation, the institution had, however, increased the scope of its central regulations and procedures, notably in assessment (see paragraph 36). It had also introduced a number of posts at faculty level with responsibilities which included liaison between the various levels of the institution [University of Portsmouth, paragraphs 22 and 36].

16   In another example, the audit report described how a key aim of a restructuring of the academic management framework had been to embed institutional policy and procedures for quality and standards institution-wide and to enhance ownership of quality assurance at the subject-level. The institutional audit report found in this instance that the extent to which embedding had occurred represented a feature of good practice, although there was institutional awareness of a 'creative tension' in the new system between more managed structures for quality and standards and enhanced ownership at school and discipline level [University of Southampton, paragraphs 29-31].

17   Another report endorsed the role of a University-level committee overseeing quality assurance and teaching and learning as 'an engine for change' in its promotion of a 'proactive and reflective culture'. In this case, the institution had sought to bring about a 'correct balance' between central and departmental responsibilities, within a policy which emphasised departmental responsibility for the quality of the student experience; the approach it had taken had focused on internal communication arrangements. Thus the audit report described how the institutional committee 'communicates and consults' through its faculty sub-committees, on which the departments are represented, and which are chaired by deans or deputy deans sitting also on the institutional committee. The report commented on the role of the faculty sub-committees as 'the vital interface between the [institutional committee] and the departments, interpreting quality assurance policy to the departments and presenting to [the institutional committee] their deliberations on departmental initiatives'. The report considered the approach the institution had taken as a feature of good practice [University of Durham, paragraphs 24-27 and 29-32]. At another institution, where faculties have an 'enhanced' quality management role between departmental and institutional levels, procedures continued to be adjusted in search of an 'optimal' centre/faculty balance.

18   In the case of a collegiate university, the institutional audit report noted the measures taken to strengthen accountability and to formalise the linkage between central and divisional committees and the colleges, finding in the arrangements 'an effective integration of the various contributions to learning and teaching' and a constructive engagement with accountability [University of Oxford, paragraph 30]. In this case the University had noted the need to strike a balance between local responsibility and centrally determined uniformity of practice, and pointed to the significance of informal networks within the overall system for assuring quality and standards (see paragraph 22 overpage). Another collegiate institution had given formal status within its committee structure to what had previously been an informal support network of college quality managers. This meeting now acted as a forum for

discussion of quality assurance issues and reported to the institutional committee responsible for quality and standards; its introduction was seen as a feature of good practice [The London Institute, paragraph 37].

19   Some reports noted weaknesses in vertical links which derived from the length of the reporting chain between the point at which learning and teaching was taking place and the centre of the institution. In another case, the audit report identified difficulties which had arisen from discontinuities between tiers of responsibility (see also paragraphs 47-48 and 65-67 below).

Networking arrangements and initiatives

20   Many institutional audit reports comment on the support given to hierarchical structures by horizontal or networking initiatives and in this context identify a range of good practice. For example, one institution had introduced 'a number of horizontal groupings…across schools and key service departments'. These included a group of school quality heads, another of heads of learning and teaching, and another of staff experienced in quality assurance; in addition, school academic administrative managers were included in school quality committees. In this case the audit report noted the effectiveness of these groupings in supporting a devolved model of quality management and contributing to shared good practice [University of Bournemouth, paragraph 28].

21   In the same vein, another institution had introduced the position of 'academic co-ordinator' with the task of facilitating links across departments and between departments and central bodies. A further linking initiative involved the employment of 'departmental contacts': members of the institutional committee overseeing quality management, whose responsibility was to maintain contact with particular departments and provide advice on quality assurance processes such as programme approval, monitoring and review. This device was perceived to contribute significantly to the consistency with which the University dealt with quality and academic standards matters [University of York, paragraph 27]. Another report endorsed the relevant institution's own view of the important contribution being made by a plenary group of chairs of faculty quality assurance teams to the development of processes and good practice [University of Bristol, paragraph 32].

22   In another case, an institutional audit report noted 'evidence of the carefully structured and effective informal and interdisciplinary networking which complements the formal activity within the committee structure'. Such networks included one of deputy and assistant heads of departments/schools. The report suggested that with this membership 'pertinent and constructive discussion, questioning and recommendation...led to increasing rigour as items progressed through the formal structures'. The design and working of these arrangements was viewed as a feature of good practice [Brunel University, paragraph 30]. Again, in the same University, a further informal network focused on learning and teaching development and, again, the membership was drawn from 'various constituencies'. In another instance an audit report noted the role of school and faculty directors of teaching and learning in embedding institutional quality assurance procedures and disseminating good practice across the faculties and schools [University of Reading, paragraph 25].

Other reports also commented on networking initiatives in learning and teaching and quality enhancement, in which central units or groups liaise with faculties and departments via nominated contacts. Again, such arrangements were seen as features of good practice [University of York, paragraph 27; St Martin's College, Lancaster, paragraph 28].

Cross-representation on committees and groups to ease communication

23   A number of institutional audit reports describe how institutions use horizontal and/or vertical cross-representation in the interests of communication and consistency. Thus, faculty boards and quality committees may include members from other faculties as noted above, and central committee members, usually the chairs, from faculty, school or departmental committees reporting to or linked with them by terms of reference. At institutional level, cross-representation may mean the wide deployment across key central bodies of senior management and administrative personnel.

Structures and responsibilities

24   Features of institutional frameworks most likely to give rise to expressions of concern in audit reports include undue complexity and lack of transparency in the committee structure, with responsibilities ill-defined. In many cases such concerns were associated with recommendations. One report linked complexity in the distribution of responsibilities, in a devolved system, with variability in the grasp of and adherence to quality assurance procedures. Another institution's committee structure was found to be 'overly complex, hierarchical and multilayered', and no longer providing 'effective, efficient, timely, appropriate and inclusive processes'. In this instance a 'holistic review' of quality assurance structures and processes was recommended.

25   Complexity or opacity in committee arrangements is noted in a substantial number of small institutions. In the case of one small specialist institution its committee arrangements were seen as too complex and hindering communication and it was invited to consider 'whether a leaner structure might help it to deliver its institutional strategies more effectively and efficiently'. Similar complexity was observed in the committee structure of another specialist institution, where it was proposed that 'the long reporting line between Academic Board and committees at course level might weaken the ultimate accountability of the latter'. Similar comments are to be found in more than one-third of the reports on specialist institutions.

26   Institutional audit reports have also found complicated committee structures in larger institutions. In one large and dispersed institution they were considered 'complex, inconsistently applied and burdensome', creating 'a considerable risk to the security of quality and standards across the [institution]'. In several other instances, audit reports observed duplication or a lack of clarity in the responsibilities of committees.

27   Some institutional audit reports noted that when key central committees, with responsibilities for overseeing quality assurance, were called on to undertake high volumes of work their effectiveness could be put at risk. Thus, one report commented

that when such a key committee became overstretched items might not be fully considered, or might be referred elsewhere, perhaps to the executive. Another report noted that when committee papers were submitted late or were tabled, this could put at risk the committee's effective discharge of its responsibilities.

28   Several institutional audit reports discuss the approaches taken by the relevant institutions to committee arrangements at faculty level or below, and the scope that might be given for local determination of structures in line with individual circumstances or perhaps traditions. In several instances, audit reports noted, however, that schools and departments tended to adopt a uniform committee structure, although the committees might themselves adopt different ways of working. One report observed a different approach: the institution in question, having devolved 'significant responsibility to schools' had prescribed common committee structures for each. The institution's own view was said to be that this had brought about 'the enhancement of effective communication and information flow' between the centre and the constituent schools. The audit report reviewed this claim and endorsed the institution's view of matters, concluding that its 'committee structures appeared to be working well', that they had strengthened structural coherence across the institution, and that they had enhanced vertical communication.

29   In several cases, institutional audit reports have reviewed the distribution of responsibilities among individual members of staff in institutions. In some instances they have found that the particular mix of responsibilities assigned to one or more individuals had the capacity to affect either efficiency, or the ownership of responsibilities for quality and/or academic standards, or both. In one case, for example, an institution had established posts at associate dean level with the intention of improving communication between schools, faculties and the centre of the institution, improving local adherence to the institution's requirements, and aiding the dissemination of good practice. The report viewed positively the 'energetic' approach of the associate deans to their 'considerable responsibilities' but also suggested that the institution should not place sole reliance on them as a conduit between the centre and local levels across the institution. A number of other reports commented in similar terms about the need to be alert to the potential in such roles for there to be conflicting demands between their institutional and faculty aspects.

30   In several cases, institutional audit reports have noted what one described as the 'too great…dependence' of quality management systems on a small core of senior managers. Another report remarked on the 'disproportionate responsibility' carried by 'a relatively small number of staff' for the operation and integration of quality and standards processes, with staff at school-level lacking 'a strong appreciation…of the way in which the processes worked together to safeguard standards or improve quality'. In this particular case, the report noted that the institution had assumed that the quality processes it had introduced would carry certain benefits, including the permeation of its quality procedures across departments and an accompanying sense, at that level, of departmental ownership. The report commented that the concentration of responsibilities onto a few individuals put these benefits at risk of not being fully realised.

31   In another case, a report on a specialist institution commented on the undue reliance placed on an individual senior manager to oversee academic and other institutional business. It suggested some dispersal of responsibilities to produce 'arrangements less dependent on a single post'. In almost one in four of the audit reports on specialist institutions there are comments on the numerous committees which feature in their deliberative arrangements (many, often, with overlapping remits), together with the occupation of key positions on many of the committees by a small core of individuals, many present by reason of their position. Several reports on specialist institutions note the effect of arrangements such as those described above. One such report observed that 'the different layers of responsibilities carried by individuals had created difficulties…for the [institution's] cycle of committee meetings' and that this had led to important matters bypassing key committees responsible for quality and academic standards.

Deliberative and executive responsibilities

32   In the first 70 audit reports, the relationship between deliberative and executive responsibilities in the context of quality management was a matter appearing largely to affect specialist institutions. In one example, an SED had not addressed 'the committee and executive structures of the institution, the relationship between them, or their interaction with the quality system', matters about which staff members showed uncertainty. In this case, the report recommended that the institution needed to 'clarify the relationship between executive actions and committee deliberations'. Another report identified lack of clarity about responsibility for quality management as between the deliberative and executive bodies, finding that 'consideration of quality and standards matters' appeared to be occurring 'more rigorously outside the academic committee structure than within it'. In this case, the institution was recommended to ensure that responsibility for academic management was located 'consistently and effectively within the academic committee structure'. In a further report it was found that staff were unclear about the locus of institutional responsibility for the maintenance of quality and standards, and it was recommended that the institution should review its committee and management structures 'with particular reference to the respective roles and responsibilities of the Academic Board, its subcommittees and senior management team'.

33   Where audit reports found the differentiation of responsibilities between committees to be unclear, with corresponding uncertainty among staff, this frequently gave rise to comments. In one such instance, the audit report observed that: 'There did not seem…to be any formal separation of management and academic issues or of the routes issues should take within the committee structure. In such cases, reports noted the extent of the overlap in membership between senior management and central committees responsible for quality and standards, so that even where the reporting lines were ostensibly separate, the division in responsibilities might be difficult to unpick. Some reports observed in such overlaps 'a significant duplication of effort by senior staff'. The relative absence from key institutional committees of some categories of staff, particularly those on part-time contracts, was also noted.

34   One audit report on a specialist institution observed that the role of the central committee responsible for overseeing quality and standards was to make recommendations to the academic board. The central committee was, however, chaired by a member of staff outside the institution's executive, with the consequence, according to the report, that the committee 'lacked executive authority and, therefore, powers of enforcement'. In this instance the report recommended the delegation of authority for quality assurance and the maintenance of standards to the committee or its replacement.

35   Recommendations focused on the remit and authority of committees are also found in audit reports on large institutions. For example, in one such report it was noted that the effectiveness of some committees might have less to do with the authority 'explicitly vested in them' than with 'the role played by key personnel sitting on the committees who had executive powers in their own right'. To set against this, two other reports, also on large institutions, had positive observations to offer on their respective institutional policies of ensuring overlapping membership between the senior executive and central deliberative and executive committees overseeing quality assurance. In each case, the aims were to 'ensure that matters addressed through executive action were brought for consideration within the quality arena' and to 'harmonise management and academic decision-making processes'. These arrangements were found to be working well.

Managing academic standards

36   In many audit reports the analysis of how institutions manage academic standards focuses on the relationship between central and local authority, and uniformity and diversity in assessment practices. While many reports recognise that the relevant institutions had achieved, or were developing harmonised assessment arrangements, in a number of reports there were concerns about continuing inconsistencies, particularly of assessment practice, with a clear bearing on the equitable treatment of students.

37   In the context of assessment arrangements, reports commonly noted institutions making changes to their assessment arrangements: in some cases towards more locally determined arrangements, in others to arrangements determined at an institutional level. Consequently, many reports comment on the interim stage of progress reached between these alternatives. Features of good practice identified in this area of the framework were much outweighed, however, by recommendations.

38   Examples of central initiatives endorsed by audit reports included one in which classification schemes were harmonised, generic marking criteria were developed, and an institutional credit framework was undertaken, with the purpose of increasing consistency in the student experience and making comparability of academic requirements and standards between programmes more transparent [King's College London, paragraph 38]. Another report noted the introduction of a framework incorporating a credit policy, level descriptors, qualification descriptors, generic assessment criteria, and revised core regulations for taught programmes. Here as elsewhere, the framework was designed to be consistent with the FHEQ.

39   Other audit reports commented similarly on the development of generic level descriptors and assessment criteria, aimed at enhancing consistency and parity in student assessment [Trinity College of Music, paragraph 30]. One report noted that the introduction of unified assessment regulations had 'greatly reduced the opportunity for significant local variations'. Another institution's employment of a central ratification panel, to ensure the reliability of assessment outcomes in a dispersed and complex programme environment, was viewed as representing good practice [Open University, paragraph 41].

40   The areas of variability in assessment practices which were linked by reports with potential or actual lack of parity in the treatment of students included (in broad order of frequency):

- assessment feedback

- assessment criteria and information to students

- penalties for late submission

- double marking and internal moderation

- discretion, condonement and compensation

- grade descriptors

- marking schemes

- classification guidelines and methods

- learning outcomes

- year weightings

- progression and

- reassessment.

41   In some of the audit reports in which the relevant recommendations appear there are observations about the 'latitude' or 'interpretation' permitted to faculties, schools and departments by institutional policies and guidelines on assessment. Thus, in one example, 'variability of practice and considerable scope for departmental latitude' were found to be 'embedded within the non-negotiable core' of the institution's assessment regulations and it was recommended to 'review and clarify' the content of this core and also 'inform itself of the exercise of discretion' beyond the core, in the interests of restricting local variability and ensuring more consistency in practice.

42   In another, similar, case the relevant institution was invited to consider, 'in order to ensure the equitable treatment of students, the extent to which variation in practice at school level [was] transparent and justifiable'. And again, in another audit report the institution was invited to consider the relationship between its internal code of practice and its other regulatory frameworks in order to ensure parity of experience for all its students. A particular concern raised by two reports was the exposure of students following different schemes or dual degrees to the individual (and different) classification methods adopted by schools or faculties.

43   Several audit reports referred to the academic rationales advanced by institutions and their staff for maintaining diverse assessment practice across disciplines. One institution's framework permitted diverse practices 'where a clear academic rationale existed'. In this context, the audit report took the view that 'a key function' at both faculty and institutional levels was 'the approval and monitoring of…diversity and the maintenance of a balance between conformity in the application of required [institutional] regulations and procedures, and diversity in the interpretation of those processes where more autonomy [was] appropriate'. In this instance, the report's conclusion was that the institution should 'review and revise assessment practices in the interests of transparency, consistency and fairness'. The role of monitoring, both of the implementation of centralised procedures and of diversity of practice, was a matter on which other reports also offered recommendations.

44   Another audit report noted, as an effect of a 'collegial rather than central approach' to the implementation of institutional regulatory frameworks, the 'potential [for there to be] implications for the consistency of academic standards and of…the student experience across the institution'. The report instanced the institution's difficulty in finding acceptance for its proposed institutional marking and grading criteria, as against the 'several sets' in use, and quoted a view that uniform criteria 'went against the grain of autonomy at discipline level'. The report recommended that executive resolution of the issue would be needed if consistent academic standards were to be achieved.

45   One audit report commented on the task for a specialist institution, with a diverse international intake, of establishing a consistent and transparent selection and admissions process for students. It recommended that the institution 'strengthen its mechanisms for ensuring the consistency of operation of procedures…where variation in practice has the potential to undermine the [institution's] policies for safeguarding equality and fairness of the student experience'.

Guidance and communication

46   Central communication with departments, and with staff at large, was the subject of recommendations in a number of audit reports. In some cases the emphasis was on the mechanics of communication, in others on states of understanding and ownership - although the two aspects often coincided. Thus an institution working to a large extent through informal communication channels was found to have less well developed mechanisms for formal communication between departments and the centre, and this was associated with a generally uncertain understanding by staff, other than senior managers, of the institution's quality management arrangements. Similarly, another report noted uncertainty among staff 'as to the roles and responsibilities of groups or committees' in relation, inter alia, to quality processes. According to the report, this uncertainty seemed to have been reinforced by discontinuation of use of the institutional quality manual and the absence of any documented explication of the quality system or committee structures and responsibilities.

47   Two audit reports commented on the need for the establishment or amendment of formal reporting links between departments or schools and the centre in respect of quality management, one of the reports referring specifically to the need for linkages between committee tiers. Various other institutions were recommended to consider the need to improve arrangements for ensuring local understanding and implementation of quality systems, structures and responsibilities. This largely meant the need for clear transmission from the centre, followed by effective monitoring. In some instances, however, the tenor of the commentary in the reports suggested variability in local engagement with institutionally determined approaches to the management of quality and standards, leading to disparate practice in such matters as the conduct of assessment.

48   The value of clear and full written guidance on quality procedures and assessment regulations is widely confirmed in audit reports, many of which cite aspects of institutional manuals or handbooks as features of good practice. Thus, in one example, the quality assurance manual is seen as providing a 'comprehensive compendium of guidance on all aspects of quality assurance…and does much to ensure the consistent implementation of quality assurance processes and procedures…' [The Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraph 202]. In another, the audit report noted the institution's adoption of a devolved system of quality management and its reliance on 'widespread understanding and use' of its suite of quality handbooks. In this instance the report noted the views of staff that these documents were 'accessible and valuable in enabling them to fulfil their…responsibilities' and came to the view that they represented a feature of good practice [University of Bournemouth, paragraph 30]. Commonly, guidance on assessment rules and procedures is a matter for separate publication. In one such case, the guide is directed to ensuring that assessment and degree classification practices are 'based on the principles of equity, clarity, consistency and openness' [University of York, paragraph 28; see also St Martin's College Lancaster, paragraph 30].

49   The practice of employing suites of procedural documents rather than a single compendium is not uncommon: for example, course development may be supported by its own handbook [University of Central Lancashire, paragraph 198]. Other institutions produce individual regulatory and procedural handbooks for the various categories of award: undergraduate, taught postgraduate, and research. For example, a handbook for research degree students which outlined 'a robust set of procedures for staff and students' was deemed to represent good practice [London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, paragraph 23]. Another report, on what it considered to be a structurally complex institution, took the view that the security of its quality and academic standards would be better served by a single, definitive reference source for policies and procedures than by the several documents in use, which were giving rise to inconsistencies.

50   The influence of various aspects of the Academic Infrastructure on the formulation and revision of institutional procedural documents features in several institutional audit reports. One institutional manual was said to address how the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements, the *Code of practice*, and programme specifications are 'integrated into the practices and procedures of the [institution]'.

In another institution the corresponding manual identified the changes in procedure or policy which followed appraisal of the various sections of the *Code of practice* by the institution's committees.

51   Many institutions publish handbooks and guidelines in both hard copy and electronic form, the latter facilitating continuous update of changes as they are promulgated. Audit reports also note that in some institutions electronic access has been given to the minutes and papers of committees with remits which bear on quality and academic standards. As a general rule, the reports show that institutional documents on quality and standards are developed and/or approved by deliberative bodies and maintained by central administrative and support units within registries or the broader academic administration.

52   The work of central support units in coordinating and monitoring quality management processes is widely noted in the audit reports and, in several instances, such work is endorsed as good practice. In one case, the unit was found to have a key role in ensuring that the quality and standards framework operated as intended and that staff were fully aware of the processes [St Martin's College, Lancaster, paragraph 32]; in another, it demonstrated 'manifest vigilance…in its oversight of the management of [University] business' and maintained a 'strong collegial working relationship with academic staff' [University of Bristol, paragraph 42]; in the third case, administrative staff in a range of functions provided 'both a guiding and a guarding role with respect to quality and standards' [Bath Spa University College, paragraph 25]. A further report noted the central administrative unit's role in securing consistency of practice and in fostering local ownership of quality and standards. Good practice was also associated, in another institution, with the networking role of assistant faculty officers, coordinated by the centre, in support of quality assurance arrangements [University of Brighton, paragraph 27; see also University of York, paragraph 28].

53   The institutional audit reports published by November 2004 comment on a small minority of institutions in which documents providing guidance and direction on the management of quality and standards had not been developed, or were slow to develop, or had fallen into abeyance. These circumstances tended to be linked with difficulties in implementing or interpreting institutional policy and practice.

Externality

54   In the institutional audit reports, discussion of externality, in the context of institutional frameworks, is largely linked to external reference points, specifically the Academic Infrastructure, although there is also some comment on external input to quality processes, and on the kind of 'internal externality' available through internal academic audit mechanisms. The finding of a number of reports was that the Academic Infrastructure had been articulated with institutional systems for managing quality and standards. Some reports noted the beneficial developments associated with the alignment, in respect, for example, of assessment guidelines and requirements, one report observing that alignment with the *Code of practice* had resulted in 'a more co-ordinated approach to assessment issues' [University of York,

paragraph 28]. There was comment also in other reports on institutions' continuous engagement with and response to the *Code of practice* as it is revised, or on their attention, more broadly, to external developments bearing on quality management [Wimbledon School of Art, paragraph 31].

55   Instances of incomplete engagement with the *Code of practice* are also to be found in some audit reports. In some reports it is not uncommon to find institutions having addressed some sections of the *Code of practice* more effectively than others. In this context two audit reports identify the need for the relevant institutions to give further consideration to Section 6: Assessment of students (2000), with the section on assessment being identified in two other reports as needing further consideration.

56   Two other audit reports associated slow responses to the *Code of practice* with lack of an institutional focus for quality management in systems where responsibilities had been concentrated at local or departmental levels. One institution, in which the audit team found 'little evidence of serious engagement…with the Academic Infrastructure', more particularly the *Code of practice*, was recommended to consider measures to 'enable it to engage with…and contribute to the Academic Infrastructure'.

57   Some reports commented more widely on the use of external reference points and of external personnel. Thus a small specialist institution emphasised the key role of external points of reference and the involvement of external participants in its quality management framework and activities.

58   Accounts were given in three reports of internal academic audit processes and the facility given by them for detached appraisal of the effectiveness of quality management policies and procedures. One report found good practice in the establishment of an Academic Audit Committee reporting to Senate and the work it had undertaken. The report noted the Committee's powers in choosing areas to be audited, as well as the development of procedures whereby its reports would be submitted to the institutional executive 'for a management response, indicating how the [University] intends to take actions forward and indicating those responsible for so doing, before submission to the [Senate]' [University of Salford, paragraph 20].

59   Another audit report, noting that in the institution concerned internal academic audits were 'triggered by Academic Board', confirmed 'the robustness of the internal academic audit process and the value of its contribution to the [institution's] management of quality and standards'. In yet another case, the relevant audit report noted the division of responsibilities between a committee of the Academic Board, charged with the development and implementation of quality assurance procedures, and another, the academic audit committee, the purpose of which was to monitor their rigour and effectiveness. Cross-membership of these committees was restricted 'in order to maintain separation and hence ensure objectivity' which the report saw as 'a laudable aim'. One audit report proposed that an institution consider establishing an audit mechanism to improve its oversight of departmental responses to central initiatives and adherence to internal codes and regulations.

Collaborative provision

60   Commentaries on collaborative provision within this section of audit reports tend to adopt a broad descriptive approach, leaving analysis and judgement, together with identification of features of good practice and recommendations, until the dedicated section later in the report. Generally, audit reports confirm that collaborative provision is overseen by a central committee or group, which may be the committee of senate or academic board overseeing quality and standards or, alternatively, a sub-committee of that committee with specific responsibility for the management of quality and academic standards in collaborative provision. Variants may include separate committees for initial approval of partners, for accreditation arrangements, or for overseeing UK and overseas collaborative provision. Several institutions have established partnership faculties, boards or committees.

61   Many audit reports describe quality assurance procedures for collaborative provision as replicating those for provision offered directly by the institution although, in a number of cases, further requirements have been added by the relevant institutions to take account of the perception that a higher level of risk attaches to collaborative provision. Several reports mention the use of quality assurance manuals or guides specific to collaborative provision and/or the mapping of procedures against the *Code of practice*. Some reports mention support arrangements for the operation of collaborative provision, such as central administrative offices and the role and work of link tutors.

62   Several reports comment on particular aspects of quality management. Some note the care shown in initial approval and validation processes for collaborative provsion [Royal College of Art, paragraph 32]. Other reports comment on the risks to quality and academic standards where the conduct of approval, annual monitoring or external examining processes is insufficiently robust.

63   Collaborative provision more generally in the institutional audit reports is addressed in a separate *Outcomes…* paper, and a later series of papers will focus on outcomes from the collaborative provision audits undertaken in 2005 and 2006.

Institutional overview and evaluation

64   Many of the institutional audit reports published by November 2004 come to the view that an institution's framework for managing quality and academic standards is sound. In some cases a direct link is made with particular aspects of this overall soundness, such as the quality and the use made of the institutional manual, staff familiarity with systems, the consistency of procedures with the *Code of practice*, the management of collaborative provision, and fairness in the treatment of students.

65   To set alongside these findings, a number of audit reports report comment less positively about institutional frameworks and the quality of the overview they provide. In these reports common factors cited include:

- the lack of a strategic approach to arrangements for managing quality and standards

- procedural complexity
- poor communication
- variable assessment practices and
- lack of response to policy initiatives.

One institution was advised to extend the remit of the central quality committee beyond its statutory monitoring function, to incorporate leadership of policy development in this area.

66   Findings such as those outlined above are often placed in the context of institutional devolution of increased responsibilities for management of quality and standards to faculties, schools and departments, although this may be accompanied by an increase in the scope of central procedures and regulations to ensure consistency. Particular difficulties associated by some audit reports with devolved management include:

- complexity of processes
- incomplete reporting arrangements
- procedural inconsistency and
- slowness in responding to the centre.

This last factor is also associated with collegial approaches to the management of change in institutions with strong departmental autonomy.

67   Strengths in devolved systems are associated with clear roles and structures supporting institutional linkage and coherence and, in particular, the quality of the interface between the centre and the faculties or schools [University of Southampton, paragraph 29].

68   Many institutional audit reports describe institutional systems for managing quality and academic standards which had been newly put in place, had been subject to extensive revision, or were still in the process of being introduced. In most cases, the relevant reports noted that conclusive views on the likely future (or in some cases, the present) effectiveness of such arrangements were therefore hard to reach, and in many cases audit reports suspended judgement or gave a provisional view based partly on experience of an earlier framework, and partly on the quality of the institution's own review of that framework and its strategy for change.

69   In one such instance the audit report noted the 'careful and critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses' of the preceding framework, which had led to a 'thoroughgoing revision' understood and supported by staff [University of Sussex, paragraphs 38-39]. In another institution, the audit report stated confidence in the new structure was based on the evidence of 'the quality management procedures operating within the previous system and the scrupulous care with which the transition was being managed' [University of Southampton, paragraph 36]. In another case, sharing some of the same features the institution's review of its new procedures was found to be characterised by its 'constant willingness to question and evaluate the effectiveness of its procedures' [St Martin's College, Lancaster, paragraph 32].

70   Similarly, in the context of an institution where its quality and academic standards framework was 'still evolving' an audit report found that 'the quality of debate revealed in the minutes of the [University's] committees' and the 'capacity for critical analysis and reflection' displayed, gave grounds for 'confidence that the [University] was fully committed to securing an effective framework for quality and standards' [University of Bristol, paragraph 42]. A number of institutions employing new (and in some cases more established) frameworks were advised of the need to review their effectiveness, particularly, in the case of one new framework, where there were already signs of strain appearing in its operation.

Conclusions

71   A number of the institutional audit reports published by November 2004 described institutional frameworks for managing the quality of provision and the academic standards of awards which were new or redesigned, and largely untested, making judgements on their effectiveness more difficult. At the same time a substantial number of audit reports expressed concerns about institutional frameworks for managing quality and academic standards and the overview provided via them of actions being taken on behalf of the institution. In such cases concerns were associated with one or more of the following: the institution's strategic approaches to quality management; the nature of the links between the centre and departments, schools and/or faculties; the distribution and exercise of responsibilities; and the achievement of parity of student experience.

72   Against these views, however, should be set those in many of the institutional audit reports published by November 2004 which described the frameworks for quality and academic standards established by the institutions to manage the quality of learning opportunities and the academic standards of their awards as 'appropriate', 'sound' or 'effective'.

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 - Titles of *Outcomes from institutional audit* papers, Series 1

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	Published date
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 arrangements	November 2005
Programme monitoring arrangements	January 2006
Assessment of students	January 2006
Learning support resources, including virtual learning environment	January 2006
Validation and approval of new provision 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
Arrangements for combined, joint and multidisciplinary honours degree programmes	October 2006
Institutions' work with employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies	October 2006
Institutions' support for e-learning	October 2006
Academic guidance, support and supervision, and personal support and guidance	October 2006
Institutions' frameworks for managing quality and academic standards	December 2006
Institutions' support for widening participation and access to higher education	December 2006

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®. 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® 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.