



## **Audit of collaborative provision through the hybrid model – briefing note**

### **Introduction**

1 The purpose of this briefing note is to describe a process supplementary to Institutional audit for those institutions whose collaborative provision is of sufficient size or complexity to require more specific attention than can be given through the normal audit process, but does not warrant a separate audit activity. The briefing note provides details of a hybrid model to be applied in such cases and should be read alongside the *Handbook for Institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland* - September 2009 (the Handbook) [Available at [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit)]

### **Background**

2 In autumn 2007 the Quality Assurance Framework Review Group commissioned research into the impact of reviews of collaborative arrangements on higher education institutions which included consideration of the collaborative provision audit process that took place between 2004 to 2007. As a result of this review, and after consultation with the higher education sector, the method for audit of collaborative provision has been revised. A tripartite approach will now operate. Whereby collaborative provision will either be audited within Institutional audit; or hybrid Institutional audit; or as a separate activity. Where QAA considers that it is not practicable to consider collaborative provision as part of the Institutional audit, it will be audited through either a **hybrid** Institutional audit (hybrid model) or a **separate** audit of collaborative provision (separate model). In coming to its decision about the type of approach to be taken, QAA will consider the following factors: the number of overseas partners; the number of United Kingdom (UK) partners; the number of private partners; the number of students on each type of partnership; whether institutions manage quality and academic standards of collaborative provision differently from other provision; the rate of growth and planned growth for an institution's collaborative provision; the outcomes of previous audit and review activities; and the level of forthcoming audit and review activities.

### **Essentials of the hybrid model**

3 The hybrid model follows the process for the Institutional audit of 'home' provision, with the exception that the hybrid model includes visits to up to three partner links, to take place between the briefing visit and the audit visit. The objective of visits to partner institutions is to enable the audit team to understand more clearly how the collaborative provision is managed.

4 The audit of collaborative provision focuses on how an awarding institution discharges its responsibilities for what is done in its name, and under its authority, through a collaborative arrangement with a partner organisation. The audit of collaborative provision is an evidence-based process carried out through peer review. It recognises that responsibility for the academic standards of awards rests with those institutions which have the powers to make the awards, or where they exercise delegated authority from others (such as Edexcel) for maintaining the academic standards of awards.

5 The audit of collaborative provision involves the scrutiny of an awarding institution's systems and procedures for assuring the quality of provision and maintaining the academic standards of awards in collaborative arrangements. It also looks at how these systems and procedures are carried out in practice by partner organisations. The process for the audit of collaborative provision does not involve direct scrutiny at the level of an academic discipline, but does explore the effectiveness of quality management at programme level as well as at institutional level.

### **The relationship between the audit of collaborative provision and the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review**

6 Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) is concerned with the way in which further education colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies. It is not concerned with how awarding bodies manage their responsibilities for collaborative agreements; this is done solely through Institutional audit. However, IQER reports are an important source of evidence in the audit of collaborative provision. Availability of any such reports at the time of a separate or hybrid audit will influence decisions concerning which collaborative partners are included in the audit. They also help in the overall assessment of risk which is used to decide which mode of collaborative provision audit an awarding institution will receive. Audit teams will not normally make further education colleges the subject of partner link visits, unless there is an overriding need to do so, for example, in order to be assured of the effectiveness of the awarding institution's management of the link(s). However, teams might wish to explore through meetings at the awarding institution and documentation how the awarding institution manages its partner links with colleges.

## **The process for the auditing of collaborative provision using the hybrid model**

### **Scope**

7 The audit of collaborative provision examines the following main areas in the light of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*:

- the effectiveness of an awarding institution's internal quality assurance structures and mechanisms its collaborative provision, including the way in which the awarding institution regularly reviews the quality of programmes leading to its awards offered through partnership arrangements and reviews the standards of those awards, and how it satisfies itself that the resulting recommendations are implemented
- the accuracy, completeness and reliability of the information that an awarding institution publishes or authorises to be published in its name about the quality of the programmes which lead to its awards, and the academic standards of those awards
- examples of the awarding institution's quality assurance and academic standards processes for its collaborative provision, as operated by individual partnership arrangements in order to demonstrate the validity and reliability of the information being generated for the awarding institution by these processes.

8 In examining these areas, audit teams focus in particular on:

- the awarding institution's strategic approach to its collaborative provision, including processes for selection and approval of, and the formal arrangements for, partner links
- internal quality assurance reviews of collaborative provision and their outcomes, including reviews of the partnership and of the programme
- the use made of external reference points in collaborative provision, including the Academic Infrastructure
- publicly available information about the quality of programmes and the academic standards of awards gained through collaborative provision
- the awarding institution's internal systems for the management of information, and their contribution to its effective oversight of quality and of academic standards in collaborative provision
- the development, use and publication of programme specifications in collaborative provision
- the academic standards of the collaborative programmes
- the experience of students in collaborative provision as learners
- the role of the awarding institution in assuring the quality of teaching staff in collaborative provision, which may include criteria for the appointment of teaching staff and the ways in which teaching effectiveness is appraised, improved and rewarded
- the role of the awarding institution in supporting the partner institution to undertake quality enhancement, that is, to take deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities

- the arrangements for postgraduate research students studying in collaborative institutions.

## Information

9 The information sources about an awarding institution which will be available to the audit teams considering collaborative provision will include:

- the information sets described in the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE's) document, *2006/45, Review of the Quality Assurance Framework: Phase two outcomes*
- the awarding institution's briefing paper
- the student written submission, if available
- the awarding institution's register of its collaborative provision
- information from the awarding institution and other sources (such as professional, statutory and regulatory bodies) about its partner links
- reports on the awarding institution and its partner organisations by QAA and other relevant bodies including IQER reports and follow-up reports to Institutional audits and other QAA reviews
- research degree qualifications rates published by HEFCE ([http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2007/07\\_29/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2007/07_29/)) and the use made of such information
- information (written or oral) acquired during and after the briefing visit, the visits to partner links, and during the audit visit.

## Students

10 The experience of students is central to the audit of collaborative provision and students have an important role in the process. Audit teams will scrutinise a range of matters directly relevant to students in collaborative provision. Where appropriate, officers of students' representative bodies at the awarding institution and/or partner institutions will meet the team at the briefing visit. In the course of the visits to partner institutions, there will be opportunities for students on collaborative programmes that lead or contribute to the awarding institution's awards and/or credits to meet the team. Students are invited to prepare a written submission, but this is voluntary and will be discussed at the preliminary meeting with the assistant director (see paragraph 15 of this briefing note).

## Audit personnel

11 In the hybrid model additional auditor(s) may be added to the Institutional audit team, which will include members with experience and expertise in the management of quality and academic standards in collaborative provision.

12 Each audit is coordinated by an assistant director of QAA. In the period preceding the audit visit, the assistant director provides advice to the awarding institution on its preparations, and works with the audit team on the initial analysis of documentation. The assistant director accompanies the team during the briefing visit and rejoins the team for the final day of the audit

visit, providing advice as appropriate. The assistant director will not normally participate in the visits to partner institutions. It is the responsibility of the assistant director to test that the team's findings are supported by adequate and identifiable evidence, and that the audit report provides information in a succinct and readily accessible form.

## How the process works

### Preparation

13 At the time when QAA begins the process to confirm the dates for the Institutional audit it requests the awarding institution to submit its collaborative provision register so that a decision can be made about 12 months before the audit visit on the approach to be taken to the audit of collaborative provision. A preliminary meeting between the awarding institution and QAA's assistant director is held to discuss the structure and content of the approach selected. The date for the preliminary meeting will usually be about 36 weeks before the audit visit (see Annex 1).

14 The purpose of the preliminary meeting will be to confirm the audit's focus on the awarding institution and not on the individual partners; to discuss the potential interactions throughout the audit process between the awarding institution, QAA, and the audit team, and other key elements of the process and their timing; to clarify the approach and scope of the audit; to ensure that the Institutional audit briefing paper will be well-matched to the process of audit; and to discuss how partner links are chosen, how the visits will operate and what arrangements need to be made, and to advise the students on the students' written submission.

15 Following the preliminary visit, the assistant director will identify the number of partner links to be visited which will be between one and three. The number of links to be visited will depend on a mix of factors including the overall size of the awarding institution's portfolio of collaborative provision and its variety, the range of formal arrangements within that portfolio, and the location of the partner links (overseas or UK), and will be decided in discussion with the institution. The assistant director will write to the awarding institution following the preliminary visit, confirming the key dates agreed for the audit and the number of partner links to be visited. **Note, the awarding institutions are responsible for liaising with the partner institutions in arranging the partner link visits. QAA will not communicate directly with the partner institutions at any point during the audit process.**

### Briefing paper

16 The awarding institution is required to submit its briefing paper and supporting documentation for the audit no later than 18 weeks before the audit visit to enable the audit team to consider the briefing paper prior to the selection of the partner link visits, and for this selection to be communicated to the awarding institution and the relevant partners in good time. The initial documentation includes the briefing paper, the awarding institution's updated register of its collaborative provision, and any other documents that are cross-referenced within the briefing paper and are needed in order for it to be readily understood.

17 Separately, QAA will provide for the audit team copies of relevant reports of the awarding institution's most recent Institutional audit and any Institutional audit of the awarding body's partner organisations; IQER summative review reports for the partner institutions; academic reviews at the subject level since the previous Institutional audit or collaborative provision audit; and relevant published reports (where available) of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. Teams will also have access to research degree qualification rates (where relevant) and the relevant aspects of the Teaching Quality Information (TQI) lodged on the Unistats website (see *HEFCE 06/45, Review of the Quality Assurance Framework: Phase two outcomes*) [[http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2006/06\\_45/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2006/06_45/)].

### **Choice of partner links**

18 On receipt, the awarding institution's documentation is distributed by QAA to the audit team. The team will undertake an analysis of the documentation and, on the basis of this information, the audit team will identify the partner links to be visited based on, where possible:

- achieving a spread across the awarding institution
- covering the range of types of partnership arrangements
- covering mature and more recently established provision
- covering both undergraduate and postgraduate provision
- achieving a balance between large and small provision
- achieving a geographic spread
- choosing areas where recent internal review documentation is likely to be available
- choosing areas which appear to offer interesting or innovative features
- avoiding areas reviewed separately under contract from another body (for example, the Training and Development Agency for Schools/Ofsted).

19 In coming to its decision on the partner links to be visited, the audit team will be mindful of the desirability of avoiding, where possible, visits to partners which have recently been the subject of QAA review or audit. The team's decision on the partner links to be visited will be conveyed to the awarding institution approximately two working weeks after the submission of the briefing paper. Where the team selects an overseas partner link there will be a virtual visit conducted through teleconferencing or video-conferencing, normally using the facilities at the UK higher education institution.

20 QAA will not request bespoke briefing papers from the awarding institution to support the visits to partner links. It will, however, be helpful for the audit team to receive, for each partner link to be visited:

- the most recently concluded formal agreement between the awarding institution and the partner at the institutional and the programme level
- the report of the process through which the awarding institution assured itself that the partner was an appropriate organisation to deliver its awards, or of the most recent renewal of that approval

and for a sample of programmes from within the link, identified by the team:

- the most recent annual and periodic review reports held by the awarding institution, together with the report of the most recent programme or provision approval
- the two most recent reports from external examiners with responsibilities for the relevant programmes or provision included in the sample, together with the information which allowed the awarding institution to be satisfied that the points made by the external examiners had been addressed.

21 This information should be provided by the awarding institution to QAA no later than two weeks before the briefing visit.

## **The briefing visit**

22 The briefing visit is held five weeks before the audit visit, and occupies no more than two-and-a-half days at the awarding institution. The purpose of the briefing visit is to ensure that the audit team achieves a collective understanding of the policies, processes and structures which the institution uses to manage the quality and academic standards of its provision. It offers the awarding institution and student representatives an opportunity to bring the team up to date on developments and changes since the publication of the most recent reports of Institutional audit and/or collaborative provision audit, and any matters arising since the briefing paper was submitted, and to ensure that the team is fully informed of the context for each of the visits to be undertaken to partner links. It will also permit the team to request any additional information (written or oral) that it requires to clarify what it has already received, to consider its lines of enquiry for the visits to partner links and for the audit visit, to propose a programme for the latter, and to allocate particular responsibilities to individual team members. The assistant director accompanies the team throughout the briefing visit.

23 The briefing visit has a standard structure, and includes meetings with the head of the awarding institution and with senior representatives of the awarding institution and of its partners. It will include meetings with student officers of the awarding institution, and representatives of students studying with partners for the awarding institution's awards may be invited to participate in the briefing visit where this is feasible. This will be discussed at the preliminary visit.

24 At the end of the briefing visit the audit team and the assistant director will discuss with representatives of the awarding institution:

- final arrangements for the visits to partner links, including the meetings it wishes to hold and the constituents of the meetings
- any documents that it wishes to see during or prior to the audit visit
- a programme of meetings for the audit visit with representatives of the awarding institution and partner institutions where appropriate
- the audit trails selected.

26 As noted earlier, all arrangements for the partner link visits will be made through the awarding institution and QAA will not normally contact the partner directly at any stage of the process.

## **Visits to partner links**

25 Visits to the selected partner links are normally undertaken by two auditors and the audit secretary. They will enable the audit team to come to a view on the reliability of the evidence on which the awarding institution relies to satisfy itself that the academic standards of its awards and credits are secure and that the quality of learning opportunities are appropriate. They will also provide information on:

- how the awarding institution is assimilating relevant aspects of the Academic Infrastructure into its collaborative provision
- the provision of information to students studying through partner links, and how feedback from students in collaborative provision on their experience as learners is collected, analysed and used by the awarding institution

- the part played by students in collaborative provision in the quality management of provision leading to their awards
- how the awarding institution ensures the accuracy of information published about the quality of collaborative provision associated with its awards and the academic standards of those awards and credits, including programme specifications
- matters relating to staff development and support undertaken by the awarding institution with partner links in support of its collaborative provision
- how the awarding institution is supporting partner institutions in addressing enhancement - taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities (see paragraph 48 in the *Handbook*)

26 Each visit to a partner link will last a day and will typically involve meetings with:

- senior members of the partner, to assist the audit team to understand the overall and strategic management of the link from the partner's perspective
- student members of staff/student consultative liaison committees for students studying for the awarding institution's awards through the link
- members of the partner's teaching and support staff involved in delivering the programme and in supporting the link operationally.

27 For some partner visits it may be practical to combine the first and last of the meetings where there is a small number of staff involved in the partnership arrangement. Where the audit team has selected a sample of programmes the composition of the latter two meetings should be drawn from those areas, bearing in mind that the number of participants in each meeting should be no more than eight.

28 The meetings will be generally scheduled for one hour. The exact timings of the meetings will be discussed with the awarding institution; where staff and/or students are only available at certain times the audit team will endeavour to meet the relevant groups at the most convenient times for the participants.

29 Enquiries will focus on how the awarding institution's procedures for collaborative arrangements are put into practice within the link, paying special attention to the effectiveness of the awarding institution's reviews of the partnership, the provision, and the academic standards of awards and credits. A broad outline of the areas to be covered at each of the meetings is in Annex 2.

### **The audit visit to the awarding institution**

30 The audit visit provides an opportunity for the audit team to review the outcomes of visits to partner links and to hold further discussions with members of the awarding institution as proposed by the team at the end of the briefing visit (see paragraph 76 onwards of the *Handbook*).

31 There will be no oral report to the awarding institution at the end of the audit visit, but a 'key findings' letter will be sent to it during the following two weeks, outlining the probable main findings and likely recommendations in the draft report. The awarding institution is encouraged to share the contents of this letter with its partners, particularly those that have been visited by the audit team.

### **Use of reference points**

32 When considering the awarding institution's management of academic standards and quality in the context of its collaborative provision, audit teams will follow the procedures set out in the *Handbook*, and will draw upon the external reference points listed in paragraphs 28-32 of the *Handbook* and on *HEFCE 06/45, Review of the Quality Assurance Framework: Phase two outcomes*.

33 In drawing on the reference points, the audit team will be seeking evidence that the awarding institution has:

- considered the purpose of the reference points
- reflected on its own practices in the relevant areas
- taken, or is taking, any necessary steps to ensure that appropriate changes are being introduced to the quality management and academic standards arrangements it employs for its collaborative provision.

### **Judgements**

34 Audit teams make judgements on:

- the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards
- the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

35 In the hybrid model judgements will apply to both 'home' and collaborative provision unless otherwise stated. In the event that the audit team considers that any of its judgements in respect of the collaborative provision differ from those in respect of the institution's 'home' provision, this will be indicated in the judgements.

36 Details of the judgement categories, the key considerations to be taken into account in coming to a confidence judgement, the types of recommendations that can be made, the definition of good practice, and the areas which the team will need to comment specifically in the report, are listed from paragraphs 16-27 of the *Handbook*.

### **Reports**

37 The report arising from a hybrid audit of collaborative provision will follow the structure outlined in the *Handbook* paragraph 82, 83 and Annexes 3 and 4 of this briefing note.

38 The published report will not identify the partners that have been visited.

**September 2009**

**Annex 1: Schedule of key dates for the audit of collaborative provision as a hybrid activity**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Audit visit minus not less than 36 weeks = audit preliminary visit</b>	Assistant director (AD) visits awarding institution to meet institutional representatives. AD provides briefing on process of audit and provides guidance on the awarding institution's briefing paper.
<b>Audit visit minus 32 weeks</b>	QAA confirms with the awarding institution the number of partner links to be visited.
<b>Audit visit minus 18 weeks</b>	QAA receives the awarding institution's audit briefing paper and SWS (if applicable).
<b>Audit visit minus 16 weeks</b>	QAA confirms the selected partner links to be visited.
<b>Audit visit minus 8 weeks</b>	QAA receives from the awarding institution supplementary information on the partnership links to be visited.
<b>Audit visit minus 5 weeks = briefing visit</b>	The audit team and the AD undertake briefing visit to the awarding institution.
<b>Audit visit minus 5 weeks through to audit visit minus 1 week = visits to partner links</b>	Audit team undertakes visits to partner links.
<b>Audit visit</b>	The audit visit to the awarding institution.
<b>Audit visit plus 2 weeks</b>	Letter outlining the audit findings is agreed by audit team and sent by the AD to the head of the awarding institution.
<b>Audit visit plus 8 weeks</b>	QAA sends draft audit report to head of the awarding institution.
<b>Audit visit plus 12 weeks</b>	Comments on the draft report from the awarding institution are received by QAA
<b>Audit visit plus 16 weeks</b>	Audit report is finalised and sent to the head of the awarding institution.
<b>Audit visit plus 18 weeks</b>	Awarding institution's statement for publication with the audit report is received by QAA.
<b>Audit visit plus 20 weeks</b>	Audit report is published.

## **Annex 2: Indicative agenda for partner link meetings**

### **Meeting with senior staff**

Senior members of the partner organisation, to help the audit team understand the overall and strategic management of the link from the partner's perspective.

Discussions might include:

- how the awarding institution works with the partner towards maintaining the **academic standard** of awards and credits
- how the awarding institution monitors and reviews the **quality** of the provision
- the awarding institutions use of the **Academic Infrastructure** in its management of collaborative provision
- the accuracy of **information** about the quality of education.

### **Meeting with students**

Students on the programmes selected as the focus for the partner link visit, to help the audit team understand, from a student's perspective, the role of the awarding institution in supporting learning opportunities. It would be helpful if the group could include members of staff/student consultative or liaison committee(s), or equivalent.

Discussions might include:

- the accuracy and reliability of **information** provided to students about the programmes
- how **feedback** from students is used
- whether students are able to **contribute** to the management of the quality of the programmes
- the extent to which the awarding institution **interacts** directly with students
- the academic and personal **support** available to students on the programmes
- the students' view of the suitability of the **resources** for learning available to them.

### **Meeting with teaching and support staff**

Members of the partner organisation's teaching and support staff involved in delivering and supporting the programmes selected for the partner link visit, to help the team to understand the awarding institution's role, from the partner's perspective, in maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of the provision.

Discussions might include:

- the **guidance** provided by the awarding institution on the delivery, support and assessment of the programmes
- how the awarding institution gives **feedback** to the partner's staff on maintaining standards and the assurance and enhancement of quality
- how the awarding institution contributes to the **development** of staff teaching the collaborative programmes
- how the awarding institution specifies requirements for, and supports and monitors **resources** for learning in the programmes.

### **Annex 3: Structure of the Institutional audit report**

Summary

The judgements

Recommendations and features of good practice

The comments

Report

#### **Section 1: Introduction and background**

This section sets the context for the audit, and briefly reviews developments since the last audit (and mid-cycle follow up). It will focus on action taken on the outcomes of the last audit (and of the mid-cycle follow up).

#### **Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards**

The focus of this section is on the effectiveness of internal processes in making sure that academic standards are secure. The use made of external reference points and of accreditation/recognition by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and other external bodies would be a feature of this section. A large part of the audit team's evidence base could be expected to come from the sampling audit trails, exploring the relationship between internal processes at programme level and at institutional level.

This section of the report closes with a judgement on the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards.

In a case where the team's commentary on collaborative provision (section 5 below) would give rise to a judgement in respect of collaborative provision different from that for the institution's own provision, that difference will be reflected in the form of words used to express this judgement.

#### **Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities**

This is a larger section, with a focus on the combined effect of internal review in making sure that there is an appropriate quality of learning opportunities for students to be able to achieve the desired academic standards, and the support available to students to help them make good use of those opportunities. The use made of external reference points and of PSRBs and other external bodies, including the Higher Education Academy, would be a feature of this section, as would the publicly available summaries of periodic reviews. A large part of the audit team's evidence base could be expected to come from the sampling audit trails, exploring the relationship between internal processes at programme level and at institutional level.

The students' written submission (if there is one) is likely to be given emphasis in this section, along with the use made of information deriving from student representation and feedback, including the National Student Survey. The use made of student support through profiling/personal development planning and personal skills development is likely to be a feature of this section.

This section of the report closes with a judgement on the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

In a case where the team's commentary on collaborative provision (section 5 below) would give rise to a judgement in respect of collaborative provision different from that for the institution's own provision, that difference will be reflected in the form of words used to express this judgement.

#### **Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement**

For the purpose of Institutional audit, quality enhancement is defined as the process of taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities. The focus of this section is on the way that the institution takes these 'deliberate steps'. It is not a presentation of examples of enhancement of learning opportunities, although such examples might be used to illustrate the effectiveness of the institution's systematic approach to quality enhancement.

This section of the report will comment on the institution's approach to developing and implementing institutional strategies for enhancing the quality of its educational provision, both taught and by research.

#### **Section 5: Collaborative arrangements**

The focus of this section is on any significant differences in approach or implementation between the institution's management of academic standards and quality of provision in its collaborative arrangements from the management of its 'home' provision. Where there are significant differences, comment will be made on the effectiveness of the management of the collaborative arrangements, in the context of the guidance in the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*.

This section of the report will comment on the extent to which any of the judgements or comments in other sections of the report can be applied to the institution's management of its collaborative provision.

#### **Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students**

The focus of this section is on the institution's arrangements for its postgraduate research degree programmes, taking as a point of reference the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, September 2004.

This section of the report will comment on the institution's arrangements for maintaining appropriate academic standards and quality of provision of postgraduate research programmes.

#### **Section 7: Published information**

This section focuses on the institution's arrangements for ensuring that the information it publishes about its educational provision and the academic standards that it supports is accurate and complete. The institution's published Teaching Quality Information (TQI) will feature in this section, with the audit team commenting on the basis of analysis by QAA's Information Unit and by its own sampling of TQI in the audit trails. The content of the section will

also be informed by the students' written submission (if applicable) and by the team's discussions with students.

This section of the report will comment on the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the institution publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

## **Section 8: Recommendations and features of good practice**

## **Annex 4: Structure of the annex to the report (hybrid model)**

### **Section 1: Introduction and background**

Subheadings for the annex might be:

The awarding institution and mission

The information base for the audit

Developments since the last audit

(Developments since the mid-cycle follow up)

The awarding institution's framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities - brief description, with reference to the awarding institution's learning and teaching strategy if appropriate

### **Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards in collaborative provision**

Subheadings for the annex might be:

External examiners

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

Assessment policies and regulations

Management information (including progression and completion statistics)

### **Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities in collaborative provision**

Subheadings for the annex might be:

External examiners

Approval, monitoring and review of partner institutions and programmes

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points, including specific reference to the publication of programme specifications

Management information (including student representation, feedback and National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes)

Role of students in quality assurance

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

Other modes of study

Resources for learning

Admissions policy

Student support

Staff support

#### **Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement in collaborative provision**

Subheadings for the annex might be:

The awarding institution's approach to managing quality enhancement - brief description, with reference to the awarding institution's learning and teaching strategy if appropriate

External examiners

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

Management information (including feedback and NSS outcomes)

Links between research and scholarly activity and the enhancement of learning opportunities

Role of students in quality enhancement

Dissemination of good practice

Staff development and reward

#### **Section 5: Collaborative arrangements**

Subheadings for the annex might be:

The institution's approach to managing its collaborative arrangements - brief description

External examiners in collaborative provision

Approval, monitoring and review of collaborative arrangements

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

Management information

#### **Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students in collaborative provision**

Subheadings for the annex might be:

Institutional arrangements and the research environment

Selection, admission, induction and supervision of research students

Progress and review arrangements

Development of research and other skills

Feedback arrangements

The assessment of research students

Representations, complaints and appeals arrangements for research students

#### **Section 7: Published information**

Subheadings for the annex might be:

The awarding institution's approach to ensuring the accuracy and completeness of published information published - brief description

Accuracy and completeness of published information, including, where applicable, TQI  
Students' experience of published information and other information available to them

**Section 8: Recommendations and features of good practice**

**Annex 5: Glossary of terms used in the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 2: Collaborative provision, and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)***

In the vocabulary of collaborative and flexible and distributed learning (FDL) arrangements, many words are given different meanings or are used in different ways by different institutions and in different countries. This is a source of actual and potential confusion. It is important that readers of this section of the *Code of practice* should be aware of the way in which its compilers have chosen to use words relevant to collaborative and FDL arrangements. As an aid to clarity for readers of this section of the *Code*, a glossary of terms is given below. The glossary is here to provide descriptions: it does not imply endorsement, approval, or disapproval by QAA of any of the functions, processes or arrangements that are described in the glossary.

**Academic Infrastructure** has been developed by the Agency in cooperation with the whole of UK higher education. It is a set of nationally agreed reference points that help to define both good practice and academic standards. It addresses all award bearing activity, wherever or however provided. It incorporates the *Code of practice*, the frameworks for higher education qualifications (one for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the other for Scotland), subject benchmark statements, and guidance on programme specifications, the definition of each of which is given below.

**Agent** is used to describe a person or organisation employed by the awarding institution to facilitate a collaborative arrangement or aspects of an FDL arrangement through the provision of service functions.

**Award** is any UK higher education award or qualification as defined by the frameworks for higher education qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, or for Scotland.

**Awarding institution** is a university or other higher education institution empowered to award degrees, diplomas, certificates or credits by virtue of authority given to it by statute, Royal Charter, or the Privy Council, or under licence from another authorised body. It is the UK institution whose academic award is the award to which a programme of study leads.

**Code of practice** is a suite of inter-related documents published by QAA which, taken together, form an overall *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* for the guidance of higher education institutions subscribing to QAA.

**Delivery system** refers to the means by which instruction and information is provided to a student on an FDL programme. It may be people-based, paper-based, web-based, or based on media such as audio or video links or recordings. Many FDL programmes employ a mixture of methods, each selected on the basis of being appropriate for its purpose. There is advantage in considering a back-up system for cases where the principal delivery system might be sensitive to failure of equipment or public services.

**Dual award** describes collaborative arrangements under which two or more awarding institutions together provide programmes leading to separate awards being granted by both, or all of them.

**The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland** (FHEQ) sets out the descriptors of the five levels of higher education qualifications awarded by universities and colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland* sets out the six levels of higher education qualifications awarded by universities and colleges in Scotland; this is part of the wider *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (SCQF). Qualification descriptors in both consist of a statement of the outcomes and achievements that a student should be able to

demonstrate for the qualification to be awarded, and a statement of the wider abilities that the typical student could be expected to have developed in the process of attaining that award.

**Joint award** describes collaborative arrangements under which two or more awarding institutions together provide programmes leading to a single award made jointly by both, or all, participants.

**Level** is a broad indicator of the relative demand, complexity, depth of study and autonomy of learning associated with a particular award. Descriptions of the levels of UK higher education awards are given in the FHEQ and the SCQF.

**Partner**, or partner organisation, is the term used to describe the institution or other body or individual with which the awarding institution enters into an agreement to collaborate. It is also used to describe an institution or other body which the awarding institution commissions to deliver aspects of an FDL programme and/or to provide learner support. It does not presuppose any particular form of legal relationship between the organisations involved.

**Programme** (of study) is the approved curriculum followed by a registered student. A programme may be multidisciplinary, or refer to the main pathways through a modular scheme. In this section of the *Code of practice* it is used to mean the academic provision which is the subject of a collaborative or FDL arrangement. The provision might be only part of a full programme, in which case it is referred to in this section of the *Code* as an **element** of the programme of study

**Programme presenter** is the term used to indicate the body charged with delivering a programme to the student. In many cases the programme presenter will be a part of the awarding institution, but the programme presenter could be an organisation that is not part of the awarding institution. The programme of study might be designed by the awarding institution, or the programme presenter, another body approved by the awarding institution, or a combination of these, but the definition of a 'programme designer' is not needed in these notes since it is a basic precept that the ultimate responsibility for approving the design of a programme of study leading to an academic award must lie with the awarding institution.

**Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)** is used to denote organisations which are authorised to accredit, approve or recognise specific programmes in the context of the requirements for professional qualification. Some such organisations have a prescribed statutory or regulatory responsibility to accredit, approve or recognise programmes and/or to determine the academic standards and professional or vocational components of such programmes.

**Programme specifications** provide concise published statements about the intended learning outcomes of programmes of study, information about the teaching, learning, learning support and assessment methods used to enable the learning outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated, and show how the units of study that make up the programmes will relate to levels of achievement.

**Quality assurance** is the means through which an institution ensures and confirms that the conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards set by it or by another awarding body.

**Support provider** is the term used to indicate the organisation, group or person(s) charged with providing learner support to students of a programme. Learner support may be provided directly by the awarding institution or by the programme presenter, but learner support could also be made available to students through a separate support provider, particularly in the form of 'local' support for students remote from the awarding institution and programme presenter.

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