

**Norwich School of
Art and Design**

MAY 2003

Institutional audit

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Preface

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the Agency) exists to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education (HE) qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of HE. To do this the Agency carries out reviews of individual HE institutions (universities and colleges of HE). In England and Northern Ireland this process is known as institutional audit. The Agency operates similar but separate processes in Scotland and Wales.

The purpose of institutional audit

The aims of institutional audit are to meet the public interest in knowing that universities and colleges are:

- providing HE, awards and qualifications of an acceptable quality and an appropriate academic standard; and
- exercising their legal powers to award degrees in a proper manner.

Judgements

Institutional audit results in judgements about the institutions being reviewed. Judgements are made about:

- the **confidence** that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards;
- the **reliance** that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the institution publishes, and about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards.

These judgements are expressed as either **broad confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence** and are accompanied by examples of good practice and recommendations for improvement.

Nationally agreed standards

Institutional audit uses a set of nationally agreed reference points, known as the 'academic infrastructure', to consider an institution's standards and quality. These are published by the Agency and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*, which include descriptions of different HE qualifications;
- *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*;
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects;
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of the what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study. They outline the intended knowledge, skills, understanding and attributes of a student completing that programme. They also give details of teaching and assessment methods and link the programme to the FHEQ.

The audit process

Institutional audits are carried out by teams of academics who review the way in which institutions oversee their academic quality and standards. Because they are evaluating their equals, the process is called 'peer review'.

The main elements of institutional audit are:

- a preliminary visit by the Agency to the institution nine months before the audit visit;
- a self-evaluation document submitted by the institution four months before the audit visit;
- a written submission by the student representative body, if they have chosen to do so, four months before the audit visit;
- a detailed briefing visit to the institution by the audit team five weeks before the audit visit;
- the audit visit, which lasts five days;
- the publication of a report on the audit team's judgements and findings 20 weeks after the audit visit.

The evidence for the audit

In order to obtain the evidence for its judgement, the audit team carries out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the institution's own internal procedures and documents, such as regulations, policy statements, codes of practice, recruitment publications and minutes of relevant meetings, as well as the self-evaluation document itself;
- reviewing the written submission from students;
- asking questions of relevant staff;
- talking to students about their experiences;
- exploring how the institution uses the academic infrastructure.

The audit team also gathers evidence by focusing on examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work using 'audit trails'. These trails may focus on a particular programme or programmes offered at that institution, when they are known as a 'discipline audit trail'. In addition, the audit team may focus on a particular theme that runs throughout the institution's management of its standards and quality. This is known as a 'thematic enquiry'.

From 2004, institutions will be required to publish information about the quality and standards of their programmes and awards in a format recommended in document 02/15 *Information on quality and standards in higher education* published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The audit team reviews progress towards meeting this requirement.

Contents

Summary	1	Section 3: The audit investigations: discipline audit trail	16
Introduction	1	Section 4: The audit investigations: published information	17
Outcome of the audit	1	The students' experience of published information and other information available to them	17
Features of good practice	1	Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information	18
Recommendations for action	1	Findings	20
BA (Hons) Visual Studies	2	Introduction	20
National reference points	2	The effectiveness of the institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes	20
Main report	4	The effectiveness of the institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards	21
Section 1: Introduction	4	The effectiveness of the institutional procedures for supporting learning	22
The School and its mission	4	The outcomes of the discipline audit trail	22
Mission statement	5	The use made by NSAD of the academic infrastructure	23
Collaborative provision	5	The utility of the SED as an illustration of the institution's capacity to reflect upon its own strengths and limitations, and to act on these to enhance quality and standards	23
Background information	5	Commentary on the School's intentions for the enhancement of quality and standards	24
The audit process	5	The reliability of information	24
Developments since the previous academic quality audit	6	Features of good practice	24
Section 2: The audit investigations: institutional processes	6	Recommendations for action	25
The School's view as expressed in the SED	6	Appendix	26
The School's framework for managing quality and standards, including collaborative provision	7	The School's response to the audit report	26
The School's intentions for the enhancement of quality and standards	8		
Internal approval, monitoring and review processes	8		
External participation in internal review processes	10		
External examiners and their reports	10		
External reference points	10		
Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies	11		
Student representation at operational and institutional level	11		
Feedback from students, graduates and employers	12		
Progression and completion statistics	12		
Assurance of the quality of teaching staff, appointment, appraisal and reward	12		
Assurance of the quality of teaching through staff support and development	13		
Assurance of the quality of teaching delivered through distributed and distance methods	14		
Learning support resources	14		
Academic guidance, support and supervision	15		
Personal support and guidance	16		

Summary

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the Agency) visited the Norwich School of Art and Design (the School) from 12 to 14 May 2003 to carry out an institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide information on the quality of opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards that the School offers on behalf of Anglia Polytechnic University (APU), which formally awards the School's degrees.

To arrive at its conclusions the audit team spoke to members of staff throughout the School, to current students, and it read a wide range of documents relating to the way the School manages the academic aspects of its provision. It did not review the professional practice aspects.

The words 'academic standards' are used to describe the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an academic award (for example, a degree). It should be at a similar level across the UK.

Academic quality is a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their award. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them.

In institutional audit, both academic standards and academic quality are reviewed.

Outcome of the audit

As a result of its investigations, the audit team's view of the School is that:

- broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the School's current management of the quality of its programmes. The findings also confirm that there can be broad confidence in the soundness of the School's future management of its academic programmes so long as it is recognised that this is linked to the current context of significant planned and ongoing change and that student expectations must be managed; and
- broad confidence can be placed in the School's present and future capacity to manage effectively the academic standards of the awards it offers on behalf of APU.

Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas as being good practice:

- the effectiveness and inclusiveness of the new management and committee structure;
- the extensive and effective representation of students and the School's willingness to innovate in order to enhance this;
- the reporting of feedback from peer observation of teaching at School level;
- the progressive approach to annual monitoring of support areas including peer evaluation;
- the quality of technician support for student learning and efforts to enhance the role of technicians as instructors through staff development;
- the contribution of professional practice to the delivery of the curriculum and to enriching the student learning experience;
- the quality and variety of regional links and their use to enhance student learning opportunities; and
- the careful development and introduction of senior student support for learning ('supplemental instruction').

Recommendations for action

The audit team also recommends that the School should consider taking further action in a number of areas to ensure that the academic quality and standards of the awards it offers on behalf of APU are maintained. The team advises the School to:

- clarify student entitlements to learning support resources and consider further how their expectations about such resources might be managed;
- make more effective use of all relevant external examiner reports in evaluating the quality of the whole course experience; and
- undertake a more comprehensive collection and rigorous analysis of student data at School and course level.

The audit team also found a number of matters where the School might benefit from further action. These matters are:

- the further development of ownership of the external reference points at course level; and
- making more effective use of the School system for the dissemination of aspects of good practice.

BA (Hons) Visual Studies

To arrive at these conclusions, the audit team spoke to staff and students, and was given information about the School as a whole. The team also looked in detail at one particular degree programme, the BA (Hons) Visual Studies, to find out how well the School's systems and procedures were working at that level. The School provided the team with documents, including student work and, here too, the team spoke to staff and students. As well as supporting the overall confidence statements given above, the team considered that the standard of student achievement in the BA (Hons) Visual Studies was appropriate to the title of the award and its place within *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*, published by the Agency. The team considered that the quality of the learning opportunities available to students was suitable for a programme of study leading to the award of BA (Hons) Visual Studies.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings, the audit team also investigated the use made by the School of the academic infrastructure which the Agency has developed on behalf of the whole of UK higher education. The academic infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points that help to define both good practice and academic standards. The findings of the audit suggest that the School is making effective use of the *FHEQ*, the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by the Agency, and the *Subject benchmark statement* for art and design. It needs to continue to develop its use of programme specifications and to ensure that understanding and use of the academic infrastructure is widespread. The School should also continue to articulate standards in relation to external reference points prior to the full implementation of its undergraduate framework in 2004.

From 2004, the Agency's audit teams will comment on the reliability of the information about academic quality and standards that institutions will be required to publish, which is listed in HEFCE's document 02/15, *Information on quality and standards in higher education*. At the time of the audit the School was moving in an appropriate and timely manner to fulfil its responsibilities in this matter, and the information it was currently publishing about the quality and standards of its awards, as accessed by the audit team, was reliable.

Main report

Main report

1 This is a report of an institutional audit of the academic standards and quality of programmes of Norwich School of Art and Design (the School or NSAD). The purpose of the audit is to provide public information on the institution's management of its quality and standards, including the quality of the development and delivery of programmes of study leading to the awards of Anglia Polytechnic University (APU).

2 The audit was carried out using a process developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the Agency) in partnership with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) and Universities UK (UUK), and has been endorsed by the Department for Education and Skills. For institutions in England, it replaces the previous processes of continuation audit, undertaken by the Agency at the request of UUK and SCOP, and universal subject review, undertaken by the Agency on behalf of HEFCE, as part of the latter's statutory responsibility for assessing the quality of education that it funds.

3 The audit checked the effectiveness of NSAD's procedures for establishing and maintaining the standards of the academic awards of APU, and reviewing and enhancing the quality of the programmes of study leading to those awards. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with HEFCE, SCOP and UUK, the audit included examples of institutional processes at work at the level of the programme, through a discipline audit trail (DAT), together with examples of processes operating at the level of the institution as a whole. The scope of the audit comprised all NSAD's provision.

Section 1: Introduction

The School and its mission

4 The School is a specialist higher education institution (HEI) that became a Higher Education (HE) Corporation in 1994. Its predecessor was the Norfolk Institute of Art and Design formed in 1988 by a merger between Norwich School of Art and Great Yarmouth College of Art and Design. The School is located on four main sites in the centre of Norwich and is one of a small group of independent art schools in the UK. The School is housed in a cluster of buildings close to the river Wensum and includes the Norwich Gallery.

5 The School is a regional partner of APU, the validating body for its undergraduate and postgraduate provision, and operates within a devolved regulatory framework which includes course validation and review and which is subject to institutional review by APU. Representatives from APU and the School sit on various key committees at both institutions. The partnership is valued by the School for its contribution to the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards and the significant developmental opportunities it presents.

6 Edexcel validates other sub-degree programmes (for example, HND Graphic Design and Further Education (FE) Foundation Diploma). The School also offers research degrees (MPhil, PhD) validated by APU.

7 While offering a full range of courses, from Foundation Diploma through to PhD, the School is comparatively small. At the time of the audit visit, the School had some 928 full-time and 57 part-time students, with 916 enrolled on undergraduate and sub-degree programmes (212 being FE Foundation Diploma students) and 69 on postgraduate programmes. Growth in student numbers has been modest over the last six years. However, significant growth is planned by 2005 through the development of Foundation degrees, expansion of undergraduate provision and development of postgraduate programmes.

8 The management and organisational structure of the School was revised in 2001-02 following the appointment of the new Principal. This included the development of a new committee structure (effective from October 2002) to provide a wider representation of support staff and students. New director roles with operational responsibilities for students' academic and support needs were introduced.

9 The School's policy as stated in the Prospectus 2002-03 is to provide a 'ladder of opportunity' and 'to encourage access and continuity at every level from foundation to postgraduate'. The FE Diploma in Foundation Studies (Art and Design) provides a first step on this ladder, although internal progression from this award is modest (22 per cent). The School has set an ambitious target for increasing internal progression over the next two years to 40 per cent while recognising that many students will wish to leave the region to attend alternative HE programmes not offered in Norwich. The School claims to be the largest centre for art and design honours degree work in the east of England and, with 65 per cent of the current undergraduate recruitment from the eastern region,

(Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex), addresses significant specialist art and design demand locally.

10 As indicated above, since the appointment of the new Principal in May 2001, the School has undergone significant institutional change. This has involved cultural, structural and organisational changes that, at the time of the audit visit, were at various stages of implementation. This is reflected in the report and in the judgments made.

Mission statement

11 'To be a centre of excellence in the region which provides opportunities for innovation in teaching and learning, and through research develops knowledge and understanding of art, design and visual culture.'

Collaborative provision

12 Currently, the School has no other formal collaborative links. However, the School has established partnerships with key organisations in the region to support the enhancement of the student learning experience. These include, for example, collaboration with other HEIs in the region through the HEFCE Four Counties Widening Participation Project and the Association of Universities of Eastern England; the Norwich Centre, an independent counselling provider for the provision of the School's counselling services; membership of the University of East Anglia (UEA) Federation of Libraries (since 1997) to widen the range and availability of learning resources; and an agreement with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service to extend learning resources and project-based activities. The quality and variety of these regional partnerships and their use to enhance student-learning opportunities were considered by the audit team to be a feature of good practice.

Background information

13 The published information available at the time of the audit included:

- the information available on the School's web site;
- School prospectus and course information;
- the report of a quality audit of the School by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) in May 1997 (the 1997 Report);
- the report of an Agency art and design subject review, November 1998.

14 The School provided the Agency with:

- an institutional self-evaluation document (SED);
- a discipline SED (DSED) and programme specification for BA (Hons) Visual Studies;
- the Corporate Plan 2002 to 2006;
- the Human Resources (HR) Strategy;
- the Learning and Teaching Strategy;
- the Information Strategy;
- postgraduate and undergraduate regulations and frameworks;
- sample pre-acceptance and pre-arrival information sent to applicants;
- sample course handbooks;
- Student Diary 2002-03;
- programme specification for the Foundation degree in Graphic Design.

15 During the audit visit, the audit team was given ready access to the School's internal documents and those available on the intranet. The team is grateful to the School for their responsiveness in the provision of information requested and in the unrestricted access afforded.

The audit process

16 Following a preliminary meeting at the School in October 2002 with representatives of School staff and students, the Agency confirmed that one DAT would be conducted during the visit.

17 At the preliminary meeting, the students of the School were invited through their Students' Union to submit a separate document expressing views on the student experience at the School, and identifying any matters of concern or commendation with respect to the quality of programmes and the standards of awards. They were also invited to give their views on the level of representation afforded to them, and on the extent to which their views were noted and acted upon. The students decided not to submit a separate document but to endorse the institutional SED, which included a section on the strengths and weaknesses identified by students. At the briefing visit, the audit team met with student representatives and was appraised of the involvement of students in the preparation of the SED and their endorsement of the matters identified. The team is grateful to the students of the School for their input into the audit.

18 In February 2002, the Agency received the School's institutional SED. On the basis of the SED, other published information and the views of the audit team, the Agency confirmed that the DAT would focus on the programme leading to the award of BA (Hons) Visual Studies. In March 2003, in preparation for the DAT, the School provided the Agency with a Visual Studies programme specification and the Visual Studies course evaluation document for 2001-02 as the DSED.

19 Members of the audit team visited the School on 26 and 27 March 2003, for the purpose of exploring with the Principal, senior members of staff of the School and student representatives, matters of institutional-level management of quality and standards identified through study of the SED and published documentation. During this briefing visit, the team signalled a number of areas it wished to pursue during the audit visit and confirmed that no thematic enquiries at institutional level would be explored. At the close of the briefing visit, a programme of meetings for the audit visit was developed by the team and agreed with the School.

20 The audit visit took place from 12 to 14 May 2003. During the visit, the audit team met staff and students of the School and investigated the selected DAT.

21 The members of the audit team were Professor H Colley, Ms A Bright, Professor J Bell and Ms B Colledge, auditors, and Miss G Hooper, audit secretary. The audit was coordinated for the Agency by Ms F Crozier, Assistant Director, Development and Enhancement Group. The team is grateful to all those who made themselves available to assist it with its enquiries.

Developments since the previous academic quality audit

22 At the time of the last HEQC audit in December 1996, the School had in place a relatively new management structure (from September 1996) that existed until the recent reorganisation undertaken by the new Principal. The 1997 Report commended several aspects of the School's operation, notably its systems for student support and staff accessibility and responsiveness. The 1997 Report also made several recommendations for improvement including the necessity for the use of staff probationary systems, and the advisability of clarifying quality assurance roles, responsibilities and committee structures, course validation periods, school-wide consideration of the students' learning experience, sharing of good practice in quality enhancement

processes, monitoring of the part-time appointments process and publication of harassment policies.

23 The School commented, in its SED, on the action taken to address the 1997 Report's recommendations and the further action being taken in the context of the revised management structure. The audit team noted that action had been taken by the School on each of the recommendations outlined in the 1997 Report. The School is aware of the need to formalise methods for the dissemination of good practice and has placed this within the remit of the Learning, Teaching and Curriculum Development (LTCD) Committee.

24 The School was subject to an Agency subject review of art and design in November 1998. Provision was approved and the School has taken action to address the recommendations identified.

25 The School was the subject of an institutional review and audit visit by APU in 2002 and was commended for a number of examples of good practice. These, together with areas for improvement, were outlined in the SED. The audit team confirmed the majority of these findings during the visit.

Section 2: The audit investigations: institutional processes

The School's view as expressed in the SED

26 In its SED, the School described how it assures the quality of its courses through a structure involving scrutiny by committees and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of courses on an annual and periodic basis. Two key principles of the School's approach to quality assurance are the involvement of both academic and support staff and the close engagement of students. These principles are met through the monitoring and evaluation of both academic courses and support areas where student views and opinion are captured through the use of questionnaires, focus groups and representation on committees. The quality and standards of new courses are addressed through a staged validation process. Validation and approval are dependent on meeting the requirements of the Academic Board and APU.

27 The School stated that academic standards of established awards are primarily addressed through the assignment of external examiners to courses with a requirement for annual reporting. Internal measures, which are being progressed to maintain standards, include referencing of courses against

subject benchmarks within programme specifications, a moderation policy to guide internal assessors, and a management information system (MIS), designed to provide important cohort data on retention, progression and achievement. The School also appoints external advisers to assist support areas to evaluate the quality and standard of service.

The School's framework for managing quality and standards, including collaborative provision

28 The School is committed to a 'whole School approach' in managing quality and to achieve this has recently developed a framework at undergraduate level, which builds on the successful introduction of the postgraduate framework in 1999. The introduction of the undergraduate framework exemplifies the close attention paid to quality and standards within the postgraduate framework. The new framework successfully completed internal validation in December 2002 and external validation in March 2003. Additionally, an extraordinary Academic Board meeting in April 2003 considered and approved changes to academic regulations arising from the establishment of the undergraduate framework. Minutes indicate thorough debate in all events with the full involvement of the validating institution (APU) and other external advisers.

29 These frameworks ensure that there is a school-wide approach to facilitating any change required by the national academic infrastructure developed by the Agency. The frameworks also have a particular relevance for ensuring that course developments follow the School's regulations and procedural arrangements and achieve greater consistency in the collection of student feedback. Full implementation of the undergraduate framework will take place in September 2004. The School also reorganised its senior management in 2001-02 and introduced Directors for Undergraduate/FE Studies and for Graduate Studies and Research (GSR). In addition, a new committee structure for the School was initiated in October 2002. Therefore, the management arrangements for quality and standards are relatively new. Nevertheless, staff, particularly support staff, reported that the new arrangements were more inclusive and effective than previously.

30 Management of annual monitoring and evaluation is the responsibility of course and pathway leaders with reporting lines to the appropriate director. Annual monitoring is well-established in academic centres and, at present,

the School is extending this into support areas following a successful pilot scheme running for the library and Learner Support Centre. Summaries of reports are then prepared by the directors and are reviewed by the School Standards Committee (SSC). The SSC is seen as the major focal point for ensuring that wherever possible enhancement and improvement should be derived from the annual monitoring, and the audit team found this to be confirmed in studying the scope of the SSC agenda, supporting documentation and minutes.

31 The SSC also has responsibility for referring resource and planning issues arising from the annual monitoring to the Academic Finance and Resource Planning Committee (AFRPC). However, the minutes of the SSC meeting, which considered the annual reports, indicate issues being referred to individual managers rather than AFRPC. The Strategic Management Group (SMG), Directors' Management Group (DMG) and the Workshop Managers' Group also address directly referred resource issues relating to quality and standards. Comments by staff in meetings indicated that this route produces appropriate and timely responses.

32 Although the new annual monitoring and evaluation procedure has only gone through one cycle, the School may wish to assure itself of the effectiveness of the respective roles of the SSC, AFRPC and the management groups in addressing resourcing issues arising through annual monitoring.

33 The School does not have a quality manual. However, the Staff Handbook includes a substantial section on quality assurance. The audit team found the guidance well-written with an appropriate level of detail. In addition to outlining internal management arrangements and procedures, there is also reference to the national academic infrastructure and teaching quality information requirements (TQIR) arising from HEFCE's document, *Information on quality and standards in higher education* (HEFCE's document 02/15). The School is working with APU on addressing the TQIR and, currently, both institutions are awaiting the outcome of pilot studies commissioned by HEFCE.

34 With regard to collaborative arrangements, a senior representative of APU reported that as the validating institution, APU is highly satisfied with the new arrangements for managing quality and standards at the School. The audit team recognises much good practice in these new arrangements. Examples include the complementary roles of the management groups and their accessibility to staff and students, and the central guidance and direction provided through the course frameworks.

The School's intentions for the enhancement of quality and standards

35 In its SED, the School places considerable emphasis on quality enhancement particularly with regard to improving the student experience. This is primarily achieved through student representation and evaluation involving focus groups and questionnaires, peer observation of teaching, and through focused staff and curriculum development. Other specific initiatives identified by the School for enhancing quality and standards include improving access for students to resources and technical support; achieving greater consistency in the management of programmes through the undergraduate and postgraduate scheme frameworks; getting greater consistency in providing course information through formally directed revision of course handbooks; improving accessibility to information and communication technology (ICT) resources through providing a managed learning environment (MLE); and revision and relaunching of the peer observation of teaching and staff appraisal. With respect to enhancing the student experience, staff reported that the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by the Agency, *Section 9: Placement learning* had been of particular value in considering the requirements arising from planned expansion of placement opportunities.

36 Given the above the audit team found it surprising that the focus within the quality section of the Staff Handbook is very much on assurance, with only a brief mention of quality enhancement in relation to staff appraisal, development and peer observation of teaching. The SED also outlines mechanisms for recognising and reporting quality enhancement principally through committees. The team was able to see that committee minutes and annual monitoring reports record good practice and noted that the annual summary report to SSC highlighted good practice arising from the peer observation of teaching. It also noted that peer review of the newly introduced annual review of support areas was leading to changes in the reporting template for the whole institution. In addition, staff reported that the Course Leaders' Group also had an important role in recognising and disseminating good practice. Beyond the committees there appears to be a limited approach to the broader dissemination of good practice and senior managers agreed that a more structured and visible approach to dissemination was required.

37 Accordingly, the audit team recommends that the School consider the desirability of making more

effective use of the School's system for formal and informal communications in disseminating aspects of good practice. Senior management see the LTCD Committee as a major driver for enhancing quality. This new Committee has only met on one occasion and, clearly, it will be some time before its impact can be assessed.

Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

Programme approval

38 The SED indicated that the School has adapted its regulations and procedures to reflect the requirements of the external reference points. In the SED, the School identifies the following as strengths in its approval process: the evolution of the undergraduate/FE and postgraduate frameworks to provide a consistent structure for new programmes; a committee and management structure that encourages debate and rigorous review; and its procedures for course development and validation which involve APU and external advisers. An area for improvement identified in the SED, which has relevance to course development, is to obtain feedback from employers and alumni. Procedures for programme approval are described in full in the newly revised Staff Handbook. Initial proposals for new programmes are reviewed by the SMG, focusing principally on issues of feasibility. Formal outline proposals are usually prepared by course teams to an agreed proforma. These are first considered by course or centre committees followed by either the undergraduate/FE or postgraduate committee and then progress to the senior committees: SSC, AFRPC and Academic Board. Assuming approval is granted at these stages, internal validation is carried out by School staff to ensure that the proposal is sound and adequately documented. This is followed by external validation by a panel of School staff supported by external advisers from APU, other HEIs and industry. Although there is no specific linkage to external reference points in the approval procedures, the Staff Handbook does address external reference points such as the *Code of practice*, subject benchmarking, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* and programme specifications.

39 The pro forma for new course proposals is demanding and there is sufficient information for senior managers and committees to judge the feasibility of the proposal. Documentation from a number of recent approvals allowed to proceed to validation (for example the undergraduate framework) indicates that procedures are being

followed meticulously. Reports of both internal and external validations reflect careful debate, with approval usually being subject to fulfilment of appropriate conditions and consideration of recommendations. Reports show that external validation panels have a majority of members from outside the School and the validating institution, APU, is always represented. Evidence was available to the audit team that proposals are rigorously reviewed, that agreement to proceed to validation is not routine and proposals may be referred back to the development team.

Annual evaluation and monitoring

40 The SED states that annual evaluation and monitoring of academic programmes is described in the Staff Handbook. Monitoring reports are prepared by course leaders for the course committee using a template that presents key course information and has sections referring to resourcing, industrial or professional relevance, linkage of teaching and research, a review of the previous year's action plan, presentation of cohort data, external examiners' reports and student evaluation. The reports are formally reviewed by either the undergraduate/FE or postgraduate committees and summaries are prepared by the Directors of Undergraduate and FE Studies and GSR. The summaries are considered by the SSC, which draws out issues principally relating to resourcing and planning, for further consideration by the AFRPC. Following the committee reviews the Vice-Principal prepares the overarching School Annual Monitoring Report for presentation to Academic Board, Corporation (Governors) and APU. Feedback from this senior level is referred to appropriate course and support areas. Recently the School has extended annual evaluation and monitoring to support areas with a template that focuses on review and evaluation of developments, evaluation of user surveys, quality enhancement procedures and initiatives, and action planning to deliver further improvement.

41 The School sees considerable strengths in its annual review process. These include peer review of evaluation in academic and support areas; appropriate templates for academic and support area evaluation; a committee structure which encourages and facilitates debate; a planning cycle responsive to annual evaluation and the well-established use of external examiners. Improvements to the annual evaluation and monitoring identified in the SED include more input from students in the evaluation of support areas; more consultation with commercial practitioners in the evaluation of course proposals; and enhancement of student representation and feedback.

42 Minutes of meetings indicate an appropriate level of discussion during the passage through committees, and the summary reports prepared by directors and the Vice-Principal give an accurate institutional overview and identify points for action. These are gathered into an action plan, which indicates targets and responsibilities, for consideration by Academic Board. Reporting back on previous action plans is a feature of annual review noted by the audit team at course level (for example BA (Hons) Visual Studies annual course evaluation). However, the newness of the current committee structure means that, at present, it is not possible to see how effective feedback on actions will be at the senior committee level. In 2002-03, annual monitoring and evaluation of support areas has been extended from the library and student support units to cover all the support areas. The process is not overly bureaucratic and focuses particularly on usage of support facilities, student satisfaction and resourcing needs and distribution. Support staff expressed general satisfaction with the new arrangements and the team recognised this as an area of good practice that gave support staff a voice in the annual review process and extended the institutional overview of its activities. The team can verify the strength and rigour of the annual review procedures. The one small reservation held by the team is that support areas are setting very ambitious annual targets, commonly in the knowledge that a significant number will not be achievable within the time frame of a year. This could lead to an unnecessary rise in stress levels for staff.

43 The audit team looked at the provision of cohort data at school level during the annual monitoring round. The annual undergraduate/FE course monitoring reports provide information on recruitment, applications, enrolment and awards, but not on year-by-year progression. The SED provided information on overall retention and only the course evaluation of BA (Hons) Visual Studies provided year-by-year progression. Given this variation the team would advise the School, as it develops its new MIS, to introduce a more systematic gathering and reporting of cohort data. Not only will this better inform academic action planning arising from annual review, it will also meet the emerging HEFCE TQIR.

Periodic review

44 At present, the School does not have specific procedures for periodic review and has used the five-year cycle of revalidation as a way of addressing periodic review. In the response to the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme approval, monitoring*

and review, the School now regards this as insufficient and is currently discussing with APU the separation of revalidation and periodic review. In addition, the School's intention is to extend periodic review to support areas. Scrutiny of reports of recent five-year revalidation events showed the process to be rigorous with an appropriate level of external participation. This suggested that no major changes were required for the School to derive periodic review from the current revalidation procedures.

External participation in internal review processes

45 External participation in the approval process is principally achieved through the function of the external validation panel with representatives from APU and other HEIs and industry where appropriate. For annual evaluation and monitoring the principal input is from external examiners and verifiers. The School recognises the need for further external input, particularly from industry, into its review process. The School provides funding support for visits from external advisers to assist with evaluation of course and support areas.

46 The audit team noted that all external validation and revalidation panels had a majority of external participants and was assured that the review process had sufficient external input to justify broad confidence. In taking the proposal for a Foundation degree in Graphic Design forward for validation the course team had consulted closely with local companies and had gained an awareness of the requirements of industry. The School may wish to consider extending this good practice to future course proposals.

External examiners and their reports

47 In its SED, the School states that all external examiners submit an annual report directly to the Principal, using a recently introduced pro forma provided by the School; the use of these pro formas has enhanced the objectivity and breadth of examiners' reports. The reports are addressed by course teams in their annual monitoring and evaluation documents, with the Vice-Principal providing a commentary on each examiner's report, and a summary of issues forwarded to the SSC. The appointment, briefing and response to external examiners are in line with precepts in the *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining*.

48 From the evidence available to the audit team it was clear that the input of external examiners is constructive and where necessary, critical, and the

School is considering measures to enhance this, for example: group meetings of examiners are to be introduced from 2003-04, enabling the discussion of parity of standards across the School's courses.

49 The audit team found that most, but not all issues raised are addressed, and agreed with APU's recommendation in its report on its institutional review and audit of NSAD that there is a need for summaries of responses to issues raised by external examiners 'to be more self critical and reflect problematic issues accurately'.

50 A particular anomaly exists in the use of examiners' reports at undergraduate level, in that course evaluations only include reports and address issues raised by the examiners for the studio area. Reports from examiners for the critical and theoretical studies component, which accounts for 20 per cent of the final named award, are included in the course evaluation for Critical Studies and responded to only by that subject team. The audit team considered that, in order to understand the whole course experience and monitor standards more effectively, there is a need for course teams to evaluate the reports from all external examiners relating to the course content, not just, for example, the studio area. It recommends NSAD undertakes this as part of the forthcoming monitoring cycle.

External reference points

51 The SED states that an initial mapping exercise demonstrating NSAD's adherence to the *Code of practice* was reconsidered during 2002-03 in light of management reorganisation and introduction of the new committee structure. Amendments to practice arising from the *Code of practice* mapping exercise continue to be discussed and approved at the SSC. The audit team can confirm that NSAD has been addressing the external reference points of the academic infrastructure at school level over the last three years.

52 Clear use has been made of the sections of the *Code of practice, FHEQ* descriptors and the *Subject benchmark statement* for art and design in the development and validation of the new undergraduate framework regulations and procedures and postgraduate course offers.

53 At postgraduate level the audit team found good evidence of ownership, understanding and use of *FHEQ* 'M' level descriptors clearly aided by effective and focused recent staff development sessions, which addressed topics such as 'teaching and assessing at masters level' and 'managing a masters pathway'.

54 Draft programme specifications are being produced for all courses, but the audit team feels that further work is still needed, particularly to ensure that the specifications are owned and used as effective points of reference by students and course teams. The team found the programme specifications available for the BA (Hons) Visual Studies and the Foundation degree in Graphic Design to be satisfactory, although it was apparent from meeting with staff that the full course team had not participated in the drafting of the programme specifications and so, thus far, did not own what has been produced. Meetings with staff indicated that programme specifications for postgraduate programmes would be available in the 2003-04 session. The team was not provided with programme specifications for other undergraduate programmes although senior managers indicated that drafts had been made. Internet-based descriptions of courses provided a significant amount of information that would be expected in a programme specification. The team recommends that further developmental work for programme specifications is desirable and that the School should seek to ensure that, in the 2003-04 session, course teams present programme specifications as courses proceed through validation to meet the requirements of the new undergraduate framework.

55 Staff have found the *Subject benchmark statement* for art and design a useful reference point in confirming standards and reviewing curriculum content, and in preparation for unitisation and entry into the undergraduate framework, which NSAD sees as providing a school-wide context for Agency external reference points.

56 Overall, while the audit team recognised the steps the School has taken to introduce the academic infrastructure, it noted significantly different levels of ownership, reference and usage of it by members of academic staff. The team recommends that NSAD ensures that all staff are familiar with and able to use the academic infrastructure documents as useful points of reference, not only in relation to new course and framework developments, but also in relation to assuring standards and practice in its existing courses.

Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies

57 An external review of provision was carried out in 1998 by the Agency. The review highlighted inconsistencies across the curriculum. The School has addressed this problem through the development of the undergraduate and postgraduate frameworks. Other areas for consideration included inadequate first destination

data and limitations in provision of careers advice. The gathering of first destination data remains a problem with most of the School's courses having a return of less than 80 per cent. The School has provided additional staffing to try to improve returns and is aiming to form an alumni organisation as a way of improving contact with graduating students. To improve careers advice the School had a contractual arrangement with UEA's Careers Advice Centre. The limited appeal of this arrangement to students prompted the School to provide in-house advice from January 2003 and terminate the contract with UEA. Meetings with staff and students indicate that the new careers guidance arrangements have got off to a successful start. It is clear that the School has responded to the recommendations in the subject review and, where new arrangements have had limited success (for example, careers advice), it has been prepared to commit further effort and resources.

58 APU carried out an institutional review of the School in 2002 which was generally very positive, particularly on the effectiveness of learning and teaching and the maintenance of standards. No major themes for improvement emerged from the review but APU did recommend a more focused approach to developing the MLE, providing better documentary evidence of the School's response to external reference points, and improving the staff handbook and induction pack. The School has responded to all these recommendations through providing a more coordinated, cross-committee approach to the MLE, producing a report on external reference points for Academic Board, and by revising the Staff Handbook and induction procedures. APU takes an active responsibility in managing the partnership. Scrutiny of committee minutes and meetings with staff indicate a strong, positive working relationship between the School and APU.

Student representation at operational and institutional level

59 The SED states that student representation within the School is extensive. Among illustrations of good practice are the extent of student involvement and the School's willingness to experiment with different forms of discussion with student representatives so as to establish a genuine and effective dialogue with all involved in the support of student learning. With the exception of assessment boards and the main management groups, student are represented on all committees. Since autumn 2001, students have been represented on most

academic staff appointing committees. The Students' Union President chairs the recently created Student Representative Group, which also involves a member of the DMG and the leader for Student Support. Students are represented on all course committees and are involved at all levels in the annual evaluation of courses. In addition, the audit team was told by students that they met, of students taking part in focus groups where they meet with workshop technicians and learning support staff. The focus groups seem to provide more immediate feedback to students than the formal committees. The small scale of the institution enables frequent informal course meetings of students, at which concerns can be communicated to student representatives and vice versa. There are clear channels of communication between the School and its students at all levels. Although some matters raised by students have taken time to be resolved, there is substantial evidence of the effectiveness of student representations and communications. For example, the institution has been able to deal with student concerns about workshop support and to explain why changes have occurred.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

60 Feedback from students is obtained formally by student questionnaires and at meetings with staff, and informally by regular contact between course staff and students. Student questionnaires are centrally administered and are included in annual course evaluations. The Principal and Vice-Principal have an annual meeting with year two and three students. Students also have a formal forum with governors through which to raise concerns. The introduction of student focus groups to supplement student feedback through questionnaires was supported in meetings with the audit team by staff and students as an effective mechanism of feedback. From 2003, questionnaires will also deal with support areas. Informally, staff frequently solicit and receive student feedback on aspects of the course.

61 Feedback from employers takes place in a number of ways. In some areas of the School, external advisers make annual visits. The views of such external advisers have led to changes, for example, in the operation of information technology (IT) workshops. Before launching its Foundation degree in Graphic Design, the School undertook a survey of a substantial number of local graphic design, animation and multimedia businesses in order to gain understanding of their needs, and to ensure the appropriateness of the curriculum. In addition, some 10 staff went on placements in local

businesses to enhance their understanding of employment practices and needs, and the results influenced the design of the curriculum. More informally, practitioners come as visiting lecturers and provide a regular channel of communication with the perspectives of employers and the world of professional practice.

62 The School Careers Adviser maintains a list of alumni and other professional contacts who can act as guides and mentors to current students. Some alumni return as visiting lecturers or to take part in the end-of-year shows. The School has identified that it needs to make more use of feedback from its graduates to evaluate the effectiveness of its courses.

Progression and completion statistics

63 School course evaluations and the SED written for the audit jointly offered statistics on application, recruitment, retention, progression, achievement and first destinations for the years 1999-2000, 2000-01 and 2001-02. Notwithstanding some minor problems in some postgraduate courses, overall retention is very good at 92 per cent. However, while the statistical information on enrolment and completion is complete, data on progression and student profiles is incomplete. Course data on student feedback were included in course evaluations for the first time in 2001-02.

64 The audit team found scant evidence of data analysis and the use of data generally in monitoring the quality, standards and comparative achievements at either course or school level.

65 NSAD recognises that more sophisticated use of cohort data could be made to inform widening participation activities, recruitment, marketing and course development. It has also flagged up its intention to offer staff development for course leaders in the analysis of cohort data generally. Nevertheless, the audit team recommends that NSAD reviews and extends the range and categories of data it currently collects, and implements its planned staff development in the analysis of data as a priority so as to inform deeper understanding of quality and standards generally.

Assurance of the quality of teaching staff, appointment, appraisal and reward

66 Aim 3 of the Corporate Plan 2001 to 2006 states that the School seeks to provide courses, 'which are challenging, current and contribute to the national development of the subject'. The quality of staff and their skills and knowledge are essential aspects of the medium-term targets to realise this aim. A number of different categories of staff are

involved in supporting student learning: FE staff teaching at the foundation level, HE staff teaching at degree level, technicians providing support in workshops, and library and gallery staff. The School states that the quality of its teaching staff is secured through procedures for appointment, appraisal and review, peer observation of teaching, staff development, and research and professional practice.

67 New procedures and criteria for appointments were adopted in January 2003 and will be reviewed in July 2003. The School is undertaking a job evaluation scheme and reviews the experience of staff required for appointments as part of a job description, whenever vacancies occur. This applies to both academic and non-academic staff. As a result, the School has been able to recruit staff with experience appropriate to its existing activities and to the changes which the School wishes to implement. The experience of existing staff in activities outside the School also contributes to ensuring the School's capacity to undertake new activities. For example, the experience of its staff in teaching at UEA has been useful to the launch of the School's own masters programmes. Staff research and professional practice are seen as important for curriculum development, the external profile of the School and in establishing external links. Most academic staff are involved in professional practice and the School has a target that all academic staff will be so engaged by October 2003. Part-time staff are typically practitioners. There is clear evidence that such professional practice contributes to the delivery and currency of the curriculum and to enriching the student learning experience. This is one of the commendably effective features of the School's support of student learning and is a feature which is highly valued by the students.

68 The quality of the staff is maintained through appraisal and staff development. The HR Strategy links the two by stressing that 'appraisal is the key to focused staff development but is demanding on time'. A new appraisal procedure is to be implemented in September 2003. A particular issue is the balance of individual and institutional needs in the areas of appraisal and performance review. Staff appraisals are identified as a major device for monitoring the School's progress in meeting staff development and training objectives. Appraisal is also linked both to the performance review of individual staff and to their access to desirable resources, for example, support for research and professional practice. This diversity of incentives is necessary since opportunities for promotion in a small organisation are limited.

69 Peer observation of teaching is one way in which the effectiveness of teaching is appraised. The School notes in its SED that this practice, which had been in place for a number of years, 'slipped' in 2001-02 when it did not take place in some course areas. In part, the explanation lies in the way the process was managed. In that year, it was transferred to the Director of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), but has since been returned to the Directors of Undergraduate and FE Graduate Studies, who are the line managers for the relevant staff. This is considered more appropriate and effective in encouraging the prioritisation of this activity. The scheme operating until 2001-02 had involved observation by staff from different parts of the School. A new scheme of observations taking place within the course teams was being piloted at the time of the visit with a view to new arrangements being in place for 2003-04. The size of course teams limits the external perspective which the observer can bring to the process. However, the audit team noted the way peer observation of teaching forms part of the course evaluation and commends the way in which the reports are discussed, both by the course team and at school level. This reporting of the results of peer observation of teaching through course evaluation has the potential to contribute both to external scrutiny and to wider dissemination of good practice.

Assurance of the quality of teaching through staff support and development

70 Aim 6 of the Corporate Plan seeks to 'support the professional and personal development of all staff in the School'. This has led to the creation of a centre for CPD. Responsibility for staff development lies with the Director of CPD, whose appointment in September 2001 has enhanced the capability in this area. As the staff development strategy evolves, the Director is seeking to identify a few 'smart' targets that are both realisable and capable of being monitored, and which will enable priorities to be established.

71 Needs for staff development are identified both institutionally and individually. The Learning and Teaching Strategy 2000 identified priorities for staff development to implement that Strategy. The HR Strategy 2002 is based both on consultation among staff and the identification of institutional needs by management. The HR Strategy suggests that the institution is proactive in seeking to identify needs. It identifies a number of areas in which staff development is needed, for example, in information and digital media, management and succession planning. There is clear evidence from meetings that

the audit team held with staff that significant staff development has taken place in these areas, which staff have valued. In particular, the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund monies have been deployed in a number of cases to train staff in research degree supervision. There has also been training in dealing with dyslexia. The Principal also identified some matters on which she has run events for all staff. For example, she led an event in April 2003 on the White Paper and its implications for the School.

72 Much staff development, however, arises from staff identifying their own needs, and this approach is reflected in the HR Strategy which places importance on subject-related and IT training. A significant amount of this staff development takes place at NSAD. A number of staff, including part-time staff, are funded to attend events or visit institutions in other parts of the country. Some staff also use work placements to familiarise themselves with changing techniques and demands in professional life. There is evaluation of both internal and external training. The HR Strategy for 2002 reports that most expenditure on staff development involved attendance at subject-related conferences; the least was spent on generic learning and teaching related training. The SMG identified learning and teaching related training as an area for higher participation. Staff development has been identified as an area requiring increases in levels of participation from a baseline of 32 per cent of all (academic and non-academic) staff in 2001-02. The Director of CPD has taken steps with individuals and groups to encourage more participation. Planned staff development on the undergraduate framework will provide a significant opportunity for a reflection across subject areas of different issues in learning support.

73 The staff development policy is sensitive to the needs of different categories of staff. Hourly-paid and part-time staff are identified as needing encouragement to participate in staff development (other than their engagement in professional practice). This is being addressed in a number of ways. The School recognises that such staff are more likely to be involved in activities funded by the School, which they organise for themselves, rather than in events organised by the School.

74 The School is currently reviewing job specifications and workshop staff are included in the representation on School committees to increase opportunities for input into curricula. A particular feature of good practice of the HR Strategy has been the pilot study of the role of technicians as instructors. Students and staff met by the audit team recognise the crucial function that technicians play in supporting student learning and the School has

worked with a small, but representative group of staff to log their activities and identify the appropriate forms of staff development and qualifications which will enhance their roles as instructors. The exercise has been positively received by technicians themselves. The closer involvement of technicians in School committees and groups has further integrated them into the planning of learning support, although there is some variability across the institution on how far they are involved with course teams.

75 The audit team also noted the good practice at NSAD in its cross-marking and newly developed 'mentoring/buddying' scheme within the postgraduate teams, which support the induction of new staff into the assessment process and further ensure the understanding of standards at that level.

76 Overall, there is a clear staff development strategy and efforts are being made to ensure greater take-up, for example, by simplifying procedures to obtain funding. The effectiveness of the strategy depends on its timely involvement in change. Examples would be the timing of staff development events to support the implementation of the postgraduate and undergraduate frameworks. Managers told the audit team that there is a careful effort not to overload staff with information, but to focus on matters that will be of immediate relevance to their work.

Assurance of the quality of teaching delivered through distributed and distance methods

77 There is no current activity of this kind.

Learning support resources

78 The School provides a variety of learning support resources including the library, studios and technical workshops, the intranet and IT suites. The School's partnerships with a number of regional organisations, such as galleries, provide additional learning environments. A combination of traditional and new learning media is provided and the workshops support a wide range of artistic media. In the SED students identify as good points of the School the quality of workshop and library staff, and the computing and digital facilities. The School has an extensive intranet and information is current, although most of the students the audit team met did not use this as their principal source of information. On the other hand, internet-based student forums were used to a significant extent. The School has identified IT and digital media as

major areas for investment in the past three years. There has been a substantial investment in IT, computer-aided design (CAD) and digital technology to meet the contemporary needs of the curriculum. It was clear from discussion that both staff and students appreciate the opportunities which this presents and the staff development which has accompanied its introduction. There is substantial technical support and the resources are already heavily used.

79 There is a range of formal and informal mechanisms for advising students on how to access learning resources. The availability of technicians and library staff seems particularly effective at an informal level. The audit team was informed of structured induction to learning materials in the new video editing suites, through which students were introduced to straightforward software before they tried to work with more sophisticated software. This induction also enables technicians to explain what students can expect in terms of access and resources. This approach is likely to be followed in other workshops. Technicians are also involved in briefing students at the beginning of projects on the resources they can use.

80 The senior members of staff met by the audit team are aware of the pressures created by additional student numbers and also the need to change the resources available to meet new learning needs. The reorganisation of workshops has brought about significant benefits to support learning. Technical staff are able to work in teams across a number of workshops and, as a result, the workshops are no longer linked directly to one particular course with 'its' technician. The gradual increase in student numbers has resulted in extra pressure on workshop resources at particular times. In addition, there have been unforeseen emergencies, such as flooding, which have affected the availability of particular facilities. All these features make it important that the School states clearly what students are entitled to and can expect by way of support. For example, the Prospectus 2002-03 states that students 'have their own work space and permanent access to a very wide range of practical workshop areas'. Some of the students the team met had the expectation that they could obtain support at any time for whatever projects they were engaged. Many did not have the expectation that they might need to make appointments to see staff, or attend workshops at less pressured times of the day. Given substantial planned increases in student numbers and the inevitable need to pay attention to the financial cost

of provision, the team recommends that the School considers the advisability of clarifying the minimum and typical levels of resource provision in different areas in order to manage the expectations of students more effectively. The proposals for the availability of timetables for all workshops and public spaces on the intranet will be one important way in which students can ensure their access to resources.

81 Learning resources are reviewed as part of the annual course review and, more recently, through the annual monitoring and evaluation of support areas. The integration of resource issues into curriculum planning is part of the role of the Vice-Principal and is addressed by the AFRPC. Workshops were reviewed recently to ensure effective use of space. There are plans in the Estates Strategy to further enhance facilities including a review of estates and timetabling to investigate a more effective use of space.

82 The audit team noted and confirmed with staff and students that a significant number of students expend substantial sums of their own money on materials they use for coursework, especially on their final-year projects. This expenditure arises out of the ambitious nature of projects and staff were clear that there was no correlation between the amount spent personally by students on resources and higher marks for coursework and projects. The School makes clear that it provides basic materials - a levy taken from students at the beginning of the year provides them with credit for materials they subsequently purchase at the School shop. The student prospectus and pre-arrival literature does not warn students that most of them will typically spend significant sums of their own money on course materials nor does it encourage them to budget for this. The approach expressed by staff is to facilitate student ideas and not to stifle enthusiasm. While the level of assistance provided by the School is laudable, the team considers that the School should examine how best to ensure that students have a realistic understanding and expectation about the costs of projects before embarking on them.

Academic guidance, support and supervision

83 The availability of individual guidance forms an important part of learning support in practice areas. The School states in its SED that it wishes to maintain a focus on individual and small group teaching, but it is aware of the realities of an increasing student:staff ratio. For 2002-03, this is calculated at 24:1 in HE areas. The strategy has been to supplement individual support provided by academic and technician staff

with other initiatives. A number of resources and guides are available through the intranet. In addition, 'Supplemental Instruction' (SI) has been piloted in the BA (Hons) Visual Studies, which uses second-year students to assist, but not to teach, first-year students. The careful way in which this has been introduced and then disseminated is a feature of good practice of the School's approach to innovation in supporting student learning. Group work, such as 'crits' also forms a major part of learning support, and this is particularly important in communicating expectations of standards.

Personal support and guidance

84 Each student has a personal tutor who they meet once a term. The School has provided careers advice since January 2003, and this new post holder advises both undergraduate and postgraduate students. There is a weekly careers advice drop-in service, as well as general talks and workshops. It is clear that there are increasing demands on this, and there was significant student disquiet about the previous level of support. The School therefore identified the need for action, made an appointment, and this has had a demonstrably positive impact on support for students which they appreciate. Careers advice and guidance has helped to make the support for employability provided, both through the courses and through the opportunities that the School facilitates, explicit and focused.

85 Assessment changes have increased the emphasis on encouraging employability skills. There is, as yet, no policy document on Personal Development Planning (PDP) but this is being actively planned as part of student support, and work on this and on key skills has been undertaken since 1999. A School coordinator for PDP is being appointed. Common units of PDP are to be included in the undergraduate framework, and will be drafted during 2003-04. Already in the area of support for disabled students, a learning development plan is agreed with the student and made available to relevant staff. Progress in this area seems satisfactory for the School to meet its own objectives and national expectations.

86 Counselling is provided through the Norwich Centre and students are made aware of this through the Student Diary, induction and the intranet. The Student Learning Centre is much appreciated. It has made particular efforts in the area of dyslexia, in which the School led a HEFCE project 'Attitudes to Disability' and increased support for students through the Centre in the light of this work. Sophisticated and clearly understood systems are in place to identify dyslexia early and support students throughout the

delivery and assessment of courses. The audit team viewed this as an area of good practice.

Section 3: The audit investigations: discipline audit trail

87 The audit team selected one DAT in BA (Hons) Visual Studies. Team members met with staff and students from the course, studied a sample of final-year assessed work from 2001-02, and looked at examples of published information including the Student Handbook 2002-03, the draft programme specification and the course evaluation document for 2001-02.

88 The course is due to be revalidated in spring 2004, when it will be developed as part of the new undergraduate framework. A draft programme specification has been produced by the Director of Undergraduate and FE Studies. It is still in its infancy and further work is needed for it to be owned and used by the course team as a useful point of reference. While there is correlation between the educational aims of the course and the subject benchmark, there is no explicit reference to *FHEQ* qualification descriptors in relation to standards; and while describing learning, teaching and assessment methods, the programme specification does not make clear how these enable the achievement of the course aims. The audit team accepts that NSAD is continuing development in readiness for the 2004 publication deadline.

89 Formal internal monitoring is manifested through the production of an annual monitoring and evaluation report; regular informal student/staff meetings offer additional, effective and valued forums for the discussion and actioning of immediate day-to-day matters.

90 The 2001-02 annual report focuses almost exclusively on local 'housekeeping' issues and is staff-focused in its approach. Early actions are identified and commented upon by staff, but it is hard to see the student input into the process. This confirms that the preoccupation with internal structural changes acknowledged by the School in its SED is changing at a sedate pace. While the statistical information on enrolment, progression and completion included in the annual report provided for the DAT is complete, data on student profiles, (age, ethnicity, special needs, qualification on entry etc), is incomplete and overall there is little evidence of data analysis, or the use of data generally in monitoring quality, standards and comparative achievement. For example, in the first

year, Visual Studies has polarised student age groups with 69 per cent aged 20 or under, and 24 per cent over the age of 25, but there is no comparative analysis in respect of their respective achievements or progress.

91 MIS information and statistics resulting from the 2001-02 student questionnaire were included in the annual report. There are both inconsistencies and contradictions in the information and data presented; it was evident from discussion that the course team was unsure as to how to progress some matters, and as a result did not have ownership of them.

92 The audit team recommends that staff development planned for summer 2003 to address the analysis of statistics in course evaluation is undertaken without delay to ensure student feedback and data can be used meaningfully to monitor quality and standards in the next course evaluation.

93 There is evidence of new developments and approaches to learning and teaching, including the successful pilot of SI, which is highly valued by both student instructors and student instructees alike, and which complements and extends existing good practice in the curriculum related to the learning and teaching of transferable skills.

94 The course has high completion rates with very good student achievement of final awards confirmed by the external examiners. The quality, breadth and overall standards of the learning demonstrated through the work are confirmed by supportive external examiner reports. However, the Visual Studies annual report currently only considers the reports of the external examiners for the studio element of the course and, as a result, most, but not all, matters raised are addressed. In future, and to ensure the quality and standard of student experience and achievement is monitored as a whole, the audit team recommends that course teams consider and respond to reports from external examiners for both the studio and theoretical areas of the curriculum.

95 To complete the cycle, annual reports are sent to external examiners towards the end of the autumn term. Any further matters which the examiners wish to raise following receipt of the annual report form the basis of team/external examiner discussions at the start of the Interim Examination meeting in the spring term.

96 The Visual Studies Student Handbook is very descriptive and assumes a significant amount of background knowledge on the part of the reader about the course, undergraduate and School

structures. As with the draft programme specification, the Handbook describes the course's philosophy and approach to learning and teaching, but does not make explicit procedures relating to matters such as failure and retrieval. While evident on third year handout sheets, and clearly understood by students, some essential information, for example, percentage bandings for NSAD degree awards are missing from the 2002-03 Handbook document.

97 However, the School is to be commended on its recently validated regulations and procedures for its forthcoming undergraduate framework, which indicate that its aim is to ensure the consistency of the information it provides to its students. This includes the provision of validated course handbooks in a common format containing generic information on areas such as teaching and learning methods, assessment, student support and learning resources.

98 Although not mentioned in the DSED, the study abroad period is well-organised. Information may be found on the intranet and pastoral visits are arranged. The information for the incoming students is good (including a Spanish translation) and there is good pastoral and academic support for them. The course team should be encouraged to incorporate both the study abroad and the teaching of incoming ERASMUS students as part of its annual course review.

99 Students met by the audit team valued their extensive representation and involvement in course and School committees and the resultant decision-making, including being consulted and involved in the appointment of both staff and students. They are highly articulate and well-informed, very supportive of academic and technical staff teams and attest to NSAD's mission to be inclusive and accountable.

100 The audit team considers the quality and standard of student achievement and quality of learning opportunity appropriate to the award of BA (Hons) Visual Studies.

Section 4: The audit investigations: published information

The students' experience of published information and other information available to them

101 The audit team gathered information from students during the DAT and during meetings with student representatives on their experience of both publicly available information and that available to them as programme documentation. The team found that the quality of information at programme level

was generally clear and reliable. The School Student Diary was considered by the team to be an example of good practice; it provides consistent information to students on relevant issues such as student support, student feedback and participation, School committee structures, the student complaints procedures and criteria for undergraduate degree classifications.

102 Students met by the audit team confirmed that the main sources of information that they used were pre-arrival and open day information, student handbooks, module support materials and other course information. Their preference was for hard copies of printed material rather than those made available through the intranet, although these were seen as increasingly valuable as a secondary resource. Generally, students considered the information available to them to be helpful, accurate and comprehensive.

103 The School indicates in its Corporate Plan 2001 to 2006 that 'the School intranet is not fully used as an information source by staff and students' and outlines plan for further development of this resource. Presently, there are a number of examples of good practice with students able to access some information off-site through email, and use internet-based learning materials made available by the library as well as having access to a good range of course/School information on the intranet.

104 The current intranet and web site was considered by the audit team to be well-designed and user friendly, taking into account the needs of disabled students. The team noted the School's plans to enhance the use of the intranet and web site for the provision of learning materials, student achievement and progression records, room and workshop bookings and feedback to students. The School also had established targets for the further development of course handbooks to a common consistent format, to ensure greater consistency of information to students.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

105 The audit process included a check on the reliability of information set published by the School as listed in Annex E of HEFCE's document 02/15. The audit team found that the School was moving in an appropriate and timely manner to fulfil its responsibilities in relation to this matter. The School had established a clear strategy and timescales for the development of this information linked to the acquisition and implementation of a MLE and Information System. The School's Information Strategy outlined the need to 'deliver quality

information to meet internal and external requirements'. The School's plan for the development of programme specifications for all its courses (by September 2004) was linked to the development and implementation of its undergraduate and postgraduate frameworks. In discussions with the team, the School's plans for development of this public information were outlined and were considered effective and informed by relevant good practice in the sector.

106 The School collects a range of cohort data through a School information management system, including application, recruitment and achievement statistics. Together with other relevant quantitative and qualitative information (such as institutional plans, strategies, information relating to programme approval, monitoring and review, assessment procedures, internal course annual review) the data are available internally, with a growing range of more recent documents available through the intranet. However, as outlined in paragraphs 63 to 65 above, the audit team identified gaps in the evaluation of cohort data and advises the School to consider undertaking a more comprehensive collection and rigorous analysis of student data. This should also inform the School's ongoing process of determining 'which elements of cohort data could be included on its web site for the benefit of potential applicants and their parents'.

107 Current publicly available information relied on by students, particularly the School's prospectus, pre-arrival information, open day material and student handbooks, was considered generally to be informative, accurate and reliable. However, meetings with students indicated a need for the School to review its prospectus/course information annually to ensure the accuracy and currency of learning resources/support statements and to ensure a close match with student expectations. The School is in the process of redesigning its web site, prospectus and Student Diary for 2003-04.

108 The audit team considered information accessed by them, which the School was publishing currently about the quality and standards of its awards, to be reliable.

Findings

Findings

Introduction

109 An institutional audit of NSAD was undertaken during the week commencing 12 May 2003. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of NSAD's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility as a UK body awarding the taught degrees of the APU. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with HEFCE, SCOP, and UUK, one DAT was selected for scrutiny. This section of the report of the audit summarises the findings. It concludes by identifying features of good practice that emerged from the audit, and recommendations to the School for enhancing current practice.

The effectiveness of the institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

110 Two key principles of the School's approach to quality assurance are the involvement of both academic and support staff and the close engagement of students. These principles are met through the monitoring and evaluation of both academic courses and support areas where student views and opinion are captured through the use of questionnaires, focus groups and representation on committees.

111 Initial proposals for new programmes are first considered by course or centre committees followed by either the Undergraduate/FE Committee or the Postgraduate Committee and then progress to the senior committees: SSC, the AFRPC, and the Academic Board. Assuming approval is granted, in passing through these stages the proposed course proceeds to the validation stage. Internal validation is carried out by School staff to ensure that the proposal is sound and adequately documented. This is followed by external validation by a panel of School staff supported by external advisers from APU, other HEIs and industry.

112 Annual evaluation and monitoring reports are prepared by the course leader for the course committee using a template that requires presentation of key information for the current year and a review of the previous year's action plan. The reports are formally reviewed by either the Undergraduate/FE or Postgraduate Committee and summaries are prepared by the Directors of Undergraduate and FE Studies and GSR. The summaries are considered by the SSC. Following the committee reviews, the Vice-Principal prepares the overarching School Annual Monitoring Report for

presentation to Academic Board, Corporation (Governors) and APU. Recently, the School has extended annual evaluation and monitoring to support areas. At present the School does not have specific procedures for periodic review and has used the five-year cycle of revalidation as an effective way of addressing periodic review.

113 Student questionnaires are centrally administered and are included in the annual evaluation and monitoring reports. Recently, the School has augmented this by using student focus groups to obtain more specific feedback. Annual evaluation and monitoring of support areas includes student satisfaction surveys. Students are represented on all the School's committees and the Principal and Vice-Principal have an annual meeting with students from years two and three. Students also have a formal forum with Governors to raise concerns.

114 Feedback from employers is obtained in a number of ways. Traditionally the School has used external advisers on validation and revalidation panels and alumni working professionally in art and design to provide formal and informal advice respectively on programme development. Recently, a more extensive questionnaire survey of graphic design, animation and multimedia businesses in the region was used to gather information on local needs. External advisers are also used in support areas (for example, library and IT) to give advice on technology developments.

115 The School sees considerable strengths in its procedures for assuring the quality of programmes and cites in the SED: review and evaluation in academic and support areas with input from students, staff, external assessors and advisers from industry and the creative professions; appropriate templates for academic and support area monitoring and evaluation; a committee structure which encourages and facilitates debate; a planning cycle responsive to annual evaluation and close liaison with its validating body, APU, in course validation and review. Improvements to the quality assurance of programmes identified in the SED include achieving greater parity and consistency in cross-course assessment; more input from students in the evaluation of support areas; more consultation with commercial practitioners in the evaluation of course proposals; enhancement of student representation and feedback; and improvements in the collation and analysis of cohort data.

116 The audit team saw evidence that agreement to proceed to validation is not routine and proposals may be referred back to the development team.

Reports of both internal and external validations reflect careful debate, with approval usually being subject to fulfilment of appropriate conditions and consideration of recommendations. Reports show that external validation panels have a majority of members from outside the School and the validating institution, APU, is always represented. The team can confirm that course proposals are rigorously reviewed.

117 Minutes of meetings indicate an appropriate level of discussion during the passage through committees and the summary reports prepared by directors and the Vice-Principal give an accurate institutional overview and identify points for action. These are gathered into an action plan which indicates targets and responsibilities for consideration by Academic Board. Reporting back on previous action plans is a feature of annual evaluation and monitoring noted by the audit team at course level. However, the newness of the current committee structure means that, at present, it is not possible to see how effective feedback on actions will be at the senior committee level. Although the new annual monitoring and evaluation procedure has only gone through one cycle, the School may wish to consider the respective roles of the SSC, AFRPC and the management groups in addressing resourcing issues arising through annual monitoring. The team recognised the annual monitoring and evaluation of support areas as good practice that gave support staff a voice and extended the institutional overview of its activities. The team can verify the strength and rigour of the annual monitoring and evaluation procedures in both academic and support areas and that revalidation events provide effective periodic review.

118 The annual undergraduate/FE course reports provide information on recruitment, applications, enrolment and awards but not on year-by-year progression. The audit team advises the School, as it develops its new MIS, to introduce a more systematic gathering and reporting of cohort data. Not only will this better inform academic action planning arising from annual review it will also meet the HEFCE TQIR. An area of weakness was in the variability of the provision of cohort data across the School during the annual review exercise.

119 The findings of the audit suggest that there can be broad confidence in the current management of the quality of the School's programmes. Confidence in the likely future management of its programmes is linked to the current context of significant planned and ongoing change, and the School's recognition that student expectations must be managed (see below, paragraph 131).

The effectiveness of the institutional procedures for securing the standards of the awards

120 Academic standards are set during the validation process, with reference to subject benchmarks and programme specifications by course teams, through the Undergraduate/FE and Postgraduate Committees, SSC and external advice sought by the School.

121 Academic standards are confirmed and assured by the assessment process, including assessment panels and boards, internal moderation of marks by internal assessors and external examiners (previously known as assessors at NSAD).

122 Scrutiny of external examiners' reports by the audit team confirmed that the standards achieved by the students are in line with standards achieved in comparable courses nationally.

123 The audit team found that the recently formed SSC, which has responsibility for all aspects of quality and standards across academic and support areas, is an effective forum. It receives reports from LTCD Committee and from subject panels, assessment boards and final awards boards, and reports directly to Academic Board, which is the senior committee that determines the School's overall approach to quality and standards. A synopsis of the quality and standards report from NSAD is included in the Quality Audit and Standards Committee at APU.

124 The audit team noted the successful validation of the undergraduate framework regulations and procedures in which it has reviewed and improved its regulations on resubmission, referrals, compensation and extenuating circumstances. The team noted that a key priority for NSAD will be to ensure the quality and standards of existing course offers and student experiences while simultaneously validating and embedding the undergraduate course portfolio into the new framework.

125 The audit team also noted the good practice at NSAD in its cross-marking and newly developed 'mentoring/buddying' scheme within the postgraduate teams, which support the induction of new staff into the assessment process and further ensure the understanding of standards at that level.

126 The appointment, briefing of and response to external examiners is in line with the *Code of practice* and confirmed by examiners in their reports. The audit team found that most, but not all, issues raised are addressed and agreed with APU's recommendation 'that there is a need for summaries of responses to issues raised by external examiners to be more self

critical and reflect the problematic issues more accurately'. This was further confirmed through scrutiny of the DAT.

127 The audit team also found that in order to understand the whole course experience and monitor standards more effectively, there is a need for course teams to evaluate the reports from all external examiners relating to the whole course content, not just, for example, the studio area. It recommends NSAD considers the advisability of undertaking this as part of the forthcoming monitoring cycle.

128 Overall, the audit team has confidence in the current and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards of APU offered by the School.

The effectiveness of the institutional procedures for supporting learning

129 The School provides a variety of learning support resources including the library, studios and technical workshops, the intranet and IT suites. A combination of traditional and new learning media is provided. The workshops support a wide range of artistic media. Students identify the quality of workshop and library staff, and the computing and digital facilities as good points of the School. The School has recently invested significantly in IT, CAD and digital technology, accompanied by appropriate staff development, to meet the contemporary needs of the curriculum. Both staff and students appreciate the new opportunities that this presents. There is substantial technical support and there is a range of formal and informal mechanisms for advising students on how to access learning resources.

130 However, the resources are already heavily used and the School is aware of the pressures created by additional student numbers and also the need to change the resources available to meet new learning needs. The increase in student numbers has resulted in extra pressure, particularly on workshop resources at certain times. Many students met by the audit team had the expectation that they could obtain support at any time for whatever projects in which they were engaged. Many did not have the expectation that they might need to make appointments to see staff, or attend workshops at less pressured times of the day. Staff try to accommodate this as much as possible. Given substantial planned increases in student numbers and the inevitable need to pay attention to the financial cost of provision, the team considers that the School needs to do more to manage the expectations of students for support, by

identifying minimum and typical levels of provision in different areas.

131 The audit team also noted and confirmed with staff and students that a significant number of students expend substantial sums of their own money on materials they use for coursework, especially on their final-year projects. This expenditure arises out of the ambitious nature of projects. The School makes clear that it does provide basic materials - a levy taken from students at the beginning of the year provides a wide range of centrally held materials for the workshops, accessible to all students and distributed and monitored by workshop staff and technicians. The student prospectus and pre-arrival literature does not warn students that most of them will typically spend significant sums of their own money on course materials, nor does it encourage them to budget for this. The approach expressed by staff is to facilitate student ideas and not to stifle enthusiasm. While the level of assistance provided by the School is laudable, the team considers that its management of student expectations about resources should include ways to ensure that students are realistic about the costs of projects before embarking on them.

The outcomes of the discipline audit trail

BA (Hons) Visual Studies

132 From its study of a sample of final-year assessed work, examples of published information including the Student Handbook 2002-03, the draft programme specification and the course evaluation 2001-02, and from meetings with staff and students from the course, the audit team can confirm that the standard of student achievement is appropriate to the title of the award, and its location within the *FHEQ*.

133 The draft programme specification is still in its infancy. There is correlation between the educational aims of the course and the *Subject benchmark statement for art and design*, but no explicit reference to *FHEQ* level descriptors. While describing learning and teaching methods, the draft programme specification does not as yet make clear how these enable the achievement of the course aims. The current Student Handbook is descriptive and does not make explicit procedures relating to matters such as failure and retrieval.

134 The course has high retention and completion rates, with very good student achievement of final awards confirmed by the external examiners. The sample of assessed student work demonstrated accurate awarding of marks and final awards in relation to both *FHEQ* and School banding descriptors.

135 Students are highly articulate and well-informed, very supportive of academic and technical staff teams and attest to NSAD's mission to be inclusive and accountable. Student satisfaction is high, and they value their extensive representation and involvement in course and School committees. Clarification of workshop service level agreements and student expectations and entitlement in relation to individual support and access may increase satisfaction further.

136 Notwithstanding its concerns about the infancy of the programme specification, student expectations and entitlement, the audit team considers the standards of student achievement and quality of learning opportunities leading to the award of BA (Hons) Visual Studies to be appropriate.

The use made by NSAD of the academic infrastructure

137 The audit team found that NSAD has been addressing the external reference points of the academic infrastructure at School level over the last three years and that amendments to practice arising from its mapping exercise against the *Code of practice* continue to be discussed and approved at SSC. Clear use has been made of the *Code of practice*, *FHEQ* descriptors and the *Subject benchmark statement* for art and design in the development and validation of the new undergraduate framework regulations and procedures and postgraduate course offers.

138 At postgraduate level the audit team found good evidence of ownership, understanding and use of *FHEQ* 'M' level descriptors clearly aided by effective and focused recent staff development sessions.

139 Draft programme specifications have been produced for most courses, but the audit team found that further work is still needed, particularly to ensure the specifications are owned and used as effective points of reference by students and course teams.

140 The *Subject benchmark statement* for art and design has been used by course leaders as a useful reference point in confirming standards and reviewing curriculum content, in relation to preparation for unitisation and entry into the undergraduate framework, which NSAD sees as providing a school-wide context for Agency external reference points.

141 Overall, while the audit team recognised the steps the School has taken to introduce the academic infrastructure, it noted significantly different levels of ownership, reference and usage of it by academic staff team members. The team recommends that NSAD considers the desirability of ensuring that all

staff are familiar with, and able to use, the academic infrastructure as a useful point of reference, not only in relation to new course and framework developments, but also in relation to assuring standards and practice in its existing courses.

The utility of the SED as an illustration of the institution's capacity to reflect upon its own strengths and limitations, and to act on these to enhance quality and standards

142 The SED prepared for this audit by the School provided a clear, accurate and comprehensive outline of the School's framework for quality assurance in the context of significant institutional change that has taken place since 2001. The audit team's findings support the School's view expressed in the SED that the system for quality assurance has evolved to meet the needs of a small institution with the School's size and specialist identity promoting a strong sense of academic community among staff and students.

143 The SED explained the adoption of 'a whole School approach' to address recommendations arising from the 1997 Report and the strengthening of transparency, ownership, reflection and consultation through a reorganisation of the School's management structure and roles. The audit team's meetings with staff and students confirmed this approach with greater cross-School ownership, communication and representation via the new committee structure, and extensive student representation and involvement being apparent.

144 This has resulted in the evolution of generally robust processes for the assurance and evaluation of quality and standards that have been supported and informed by the sharing of good practice through the School's mature relationship with APU.

145 The School has evaluated its strengths and areas for improvement accurately in the SED. It recognises the need for embedding good practice over time. The audit team noted the progress made by the School in addressing some matters identified for improvement.

146 The audit team's findings support the School's view that its size provides a strong basis for quality enhancement with responsiveness to student feedback being a strength cited by students.

147 However, the need to undertake more formalised, rigorous annual evaluation of provision and to share good practice more widely across the School were areas highlighted by the institution in its SED, and reinforced through the audit team's meetings and documentation made available.

The team considered this to be a reflection of the relatively short period of operation of the new committee and management structures, and that the recent introduction of the 'whole School approach' would take some time to embed.

148 This clarity, accuracy and comprehensiveness of the SED supported the audit team's overall broad confidence in the way in which quality and standards were being assured by the School and its capacity for self-evaluation and enhancement.

Commentary on the School's intentions for the enhancement of quality and standards

149 The School places considerable emphasis on quality enhancement, particularly with regard to improving the student experience. Specific initiatives identified by the School for enhancing quality and standards include improving access for students to resources and technical support; achieving greater consistency in the management of programmes through the structural frameworks; enhanced collection and analysis of cohort data; greater consistency in course information through formally directed revision of course handbooks; improving accessibility to ICT resources through providing a MLE; increasing links to business and the community to inform course design; and staff development activities that are linked to curriculum development and technology advances.

150 The audit team can confirm that currently committee minutes and annual monitoring reports record good practice. The School sees the SSC as the major focal point for ensuring that, wherever possible, enhancement and improvement should be derived from the annual evaluation and monitoring, and the team found this claim to be supported. However, beyond the committees there appears to be a limited approach to the broader dissemination of good practice and senior managers agreed that a more structured and visible approach to dissemination was required. Senior management see the LTCDC Committee as a major driver for enhancing quality. At the time of the audit this new Committee had only met on one occasion and clearly it will be some time before its impact can be assessed. Accordingly, the team recommends that the School consider the desirability of making more effective use of its formal and informal communication system in disseminating aspects of good practice. Given that the School addresses this recommendation, then the team has confidence in the School's ability to meet the enhancement goals listed above. The goals are appropriate in that they engage with weaker aspects of provision identified by the team.

The reliability of information

151 The audit process included a check on the reliability of the information set published by the School as listed in Annex E of HEFCE's document 02/15. The School collects a range of cohort data through a School information management system, including application, recruitment and achievement statistics, that informs annual course evaluation and is used for operational purposes more generally. This data, together with other relevant quantitative and qualitative information (such as institutional plans, strategies, information relating to programme approval, monitoring and review, and assessment procedures) is available internally, with a growing range of more recent documents available through the intranet. The audit team found that the School was moving in an appropriate and timely manner to fulfil its responsibilities in relation to this matter.

152 The School is developing programme specifications for all its courses (by September 2004) linked to the development and implementation of its undergraduate and postgraduate frameworks. Clear plans were in place for the further development of its intranet and web site and the publication of relevant quantitative and qualitative information. The School was in the process of determining 'which elements of cohort data should be included on its web site for the benefit of potential applicants and their parents'.

153 Current publicly available information relied upon by students, particularly the School's Prospectus, pre-arrival information, open day material and student handbooks, was considered generally by students to be informative, accurate and reliable. However, in meetings with students the audit team noted a need for the School to review its Prospectus/course information annually to ensure the accuracy and currency of learning resources/support statements, and to ensure a close match with student expectation. The School was in the process of redesigning its web site, Prospectus and Student Diary for 2003-04 to enhance these further. However, the team considered information accessed by them, which the School was publishing currently about the quality and standards of its awards, to be reliable.

Features of good practice

154 Among the features of good practice across the School identified throughout the audit are:

- i. the quality and variety of regional links and their use to enhance student learning opportunities (paragraph 12);

- ii. the effectiveness and inclusiveness of the new management and committee structure (paragraphs 29 and 30);
- iii. the progressive approach to annual monitoring of support areas including peer evaluation (paragraph 42);
- iv. the extensive and effective representation of students and the School's willingness to innovate in order to enhance this (paragraphs 59 and 60);
- v. the contribution of professional practice to the delivery of the curriculum and to enriching the student learning experience (paragraph 67);
- vi. the reporting of feedback from peer observation of teaching at School level; (paragraph 69);
- vii. the quality of technician support for student learning and efforts to enhance the role of technicians as instructors through staff development; (paragraph 74); and
- viii. the careful development and introduction of peer support for learning (SI) (paragraph 83).

Recommendations for action

155 The School is advised to:

- i. consider undertaking a more comprehensive collection and rigorous analysis of student data at School and course level (paragraphs 43 and 91);
- ii. consider making more effective use of all relevant external examiner reports in evaluating the quality of the whole course experience (paragraphs 49, 50 and 94); and
- iii. consider clarifying student entitlements to learning support resources and consider further how their expectations might be managed (paragraphs 80 and 82).

156 It would also be desirable to:

- i. make more effective use of the School system for the dissemination of aspects of good practice (paragraph 36); and
- ii. further develop the ownership of the external reference points at course level (paragraph 56).

Appendix

The School's response to the audit report

NSAD welcomes the report of the Agency's institutional audit and recognises the opportunity for enhancement provided by the process and outcome of the audit. The School is continuing to develop the current good practice as identified in the report through the new management and committee structure. The areas identified for improvement will be considered and monitored by the SSC during the 2003-04 academic year and reported to the Agency in July 2004.

The School is pleased to note that the areas of good practice reflect the School's core values as:

- a commitment to the intellectual and personal development of the student as a basis for a lifetime of experience and learning;
- an open, accountable and inclusive School environment;
- recognition of the contribution of all members of the School to its success.

