



# **Cardiff Metropolitan University**

Institutional Review (hybrid model)  
by the Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education

May 2014

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## About this review

This is a report of an Institutional Review (hybrid model) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Cardiff Metropolitan University. The review took place on 19-23 May 2014 and was conducted by a team of five reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Paul Brunt
- Dr Sylvia Hargreaves
- Dr David Houlston
- Dr Carol Vielba
- Mrs Rebecca Freeman (student reviewer)
- Miss Rachel Lucas (review secretary).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Cardiff Metropolitan University and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. In this report the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - threshold academic standards<sup>1</sup>
  - the quality of learning opportunities
  - the information provided about learning opportunities
  - the enhancement of learning opportunities
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice.

A summary of the [key findings](#) can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>2</sup> Background information about Cardiff Metropolitan University is given on pages 3-4 of this report. A dedicated page of the website explains the method for [Institutional Review](#) of higher education institutions in Wales<sup>3</sup> and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents.

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<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/ir-wales](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/ir-wales).

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Cardiff Metropolitan University

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

- Academic standards at the University **meet** UK expectations for threshold standards.
- The quality of student learning opportunities at the University **meets** UK expectations.
- Information about learning opportunities produced by the University **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities at the University **meets** UK expectations.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

- The work of the Learning and Teaching Development Unit in providing a comprehensive range of opportunities and resources for enhancement of learning and teaching (paragraph 2.2.1).
- The Students' Union's engagement with students in collaborative partnerships to enhance the quality of representation (paragraph 2.3.1).
- The Your Career online learning object, which supplies careers advice and a flexible learning instrument for careers development modules (paragraph 2.7.3).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following recommendations to Cardiff Metropolitan University.

By January 2015:

- ensure that policies and guidance for formative assessment feedback include equitable treatment of draft coursework assignments in all taught provision (paragraph 1.3.3)
- review and clarify complaints procedures for collaborative provision and ensure that these are consistently and accurately communicated to students (paragraph 2.6.5).

By March 2015:

- apply a consistent University-wide approach to the training, support and monitoring of postgraduate research students engaged in teaching and assessment (paragraph 2.10.8).

Ongoing:

- ensure that all collaborative and articulation arrangements are covered by completed, signed and current inter-institutional agreements (paragraph 2.11.6)
- ensure the clarity of its formal documentation with regard to articulation arrangements (paragraph 2.11.15).

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the operational description and handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Institutional Review in Wales](#).<sup>4</sup>

## About Cardiff Metropolitan University

Cardiff Metropolitan University (the University) originated in 1976 when four colleges amalgamated to form the South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education, later the Cardiff Institute of Higher Education. It became an Associated Institution of the University of Wales in 1992, and a full member in 1996, by which time it was a University College with the title University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC). In 2004 UWIC became a Constituent Institution of the University of Wales.

UWIC was granted powers to award taught degrees in 1993 and research degrees in 2009. However, as an accredited institution of the University of Wales, it held its degree awarding powers in abeyance and all graduates received University of Wales awards. When the University of Wales announced a new academic strategy in 2011, UWIC invoked its own awarding powers and changed its name to Cardiff Metropolitan University. At the time of this review, about 400 students are still registered for University of Wales awards.

The University's mission is to provide education and training opportunities that are 'accessible, flexible, inclusive, lifelong and of the highest quality'. It is committed to strengthening the higher education system in south-east Wales and aspires to grow its reputation in research and enterprise by developing 'established and new centres of excellence in professional education, applied research and knowledge transfer'. It offers professionally and vocationally relevant undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and a range of applied research activities. In its drive to become a 'top-10 post-1992 University', it has focused particular attention on student employability, promoting work placements and/or voluntary work, and developing links with employers and professional bodies.

The University has a student population of about 17,000 in five academic schools and 19 collaborative partner institutions. Of its students, 59 per cent are undergraduates, 38 per cent are on taught postgraduate programmes, and three per cent are studying for postgraduate research degrees. Most of its students (88 per cent) are full-time, and 10 per cent of its Cardiff-based students are from overseas.

The University's five schools are the Cardiff School of Art and Design, Cardiff School of Education, Cardiff School of Health Science, Cardiff School of Management, and Cardiff School of Sport. In 2013-14, these schools are spread over three campuses, but from 2014-15 the University will have consolidated its provision onto two campuses in Cardiff: Cyncoed and Llandaff.

The Board of Governors is responsible for the educational character, mission and strategy of the University, and the Academic Board oversees the quality and standards of its academic provision. The Vice-Chancellor has responsibility for the management of the University, supported by the Vice-Chancellor's Board, which is made up of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Director of Student Experience, four Pro Vice-Chancellors and the Chief Operating Officer.

Since 2008 the University has seen a carefully managed growth in its collaborative provision students, from 816 students in 2008 to 4,337 in January 2013. It has 19 partner institutions, eight in the UK (one of which has four branch campuses overseas) and 11 overseas partners. Most collaborative provision is linked to the Cardiff School of Management.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/ir-wales](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/ir-wales).

The University aims to develop its range of collaborative partnerships in Wales and overseas to an eventual maximum of 20 active, robust and durable partnerships, and to increase student numbers in transnational education to 6,200 by the end of the planning period 2012-17.

## Explanation of the findings about Cardiff Metropolitan University

This section explains the key findings of the review in more detail.<sup>5</sup>

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#)<sup>6</sup> is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.<sup>7</sup>

### 1 Academic standards

#### Outcome

The academic standards at the University **meet** UK expectations for threshold standards. The review team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

#### Meeting external qualifications benchmarks

1.1 The University has systems in place to ensure that each qualification is appropriately aligned to *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), and the review team found that they are working effectively. The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) also informs programme design. The Academic Handbook provides guidance on programme design, and the Learning and Teaching Development Unit and Deputy/Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) assist programme teams to ensure that programmes align with the FHEQ and that there is a sufficient volume of study for students to demonstrate achievement of the programme learning outcomes.

1.1.1 At programme approval (see also paragraph 1.4.1), validation panels seek confirmation of a match with the FHEQ and volume of study through a scrutiny of the programme specification and module templates as part of the approval process. The training of validation chairs, panellists and student panellists includes reference to the FHEQ as a requirement of approval. The University's validation report template requires the panel to confirm that the proposed programme is aligned with the FHEQ. Continuing alignment with the FHEQ in all programmes, at the University and in collaborative partnerships, is monitored by external examiners, and refreshed every five years at periodic review.

#### Use of external examiners

1.2 The University makes scrupulous use of external examiners, and has robust processes to consider and respond to their reports. All programmes have at least one examiner. Nomination, appointment and induction of examiners follow procedures set out in the Academic Handbook. The Dean of Quality and Standards, and an appropriately constituted examiner appointment panel, oversee these procedures, which have recently been revised to align more fully with *Chapter B7: External examining* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code).

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<sup>5</sup> The full body of evidence used to compile the report is not published. However, it is available on request for inspection. Please contact QAA Quality Assurance Group.

<sup>6</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary).

<sup>7</sup> See note 4.

1.2.1 The Academic Handbook and the induction process comprehensively inform examiners about their role, level of authority, and reports. The University has continued to develop examiner report templates to ensure that reports are effective. Examiners' reports are distributed to programme staff and student representatives and discussed at programme committees. A formal response to the report, noting actions to be taken, is made using a response template, which has to be ratified by the relevant programme committee and the Deputy/Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) before it is sent to the examiner.

1.2.2 External examiners' reports form part of the evidence base for action planning in the University's annual programme review process. These reviews are considered by the relevant schools' Learning and Teaching Committees, where Deputy/Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) summarise key issues raised by examiners. These summaries are also presented to the Academic Quality and Standards Board and the Learning and Teaching Board, the latter having a subgroup which identifies enhancement themes. An annual overview of external examiners' issues in collaborative provision is prepared by the Collaborative Provision Office, and presented to the same committees and the Collaborative Provision Committee. The Dean of Quality and Standards produces an overarching report covering all of the University's provision, which is presented and discussed by key committees and the Academic Board.

1.2.3 The review team found that committee structures are well documented and work as intended. Schools make appropriate responses to external examiners and take effective action. External examining processes are fully and widely understood and provide an appropriate focus for quality assurance throughout the University.

1.2.4 Students are made aware of examiner reports through their course representatives, who are issued with all relevant paperwork for annual reviews. In collaborative partnerships, students have access to examiner reports through their institutions' virtual learning environments. The University may wish to consider providing such access to all students as it develops its new virtual learning environment.

## **Assessment and standards**

1.3 The University's processes for the design, approval, monitoring and review of assessment strategies ensure that students have the opportunities to demonstrate the learning outcomes of the award. Assessment strategies are set out in programme specifications, programme handbooks and module guides; they are informed by the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy; Assessment and Feedback Policy; School Assessment Guidelines; and the Academic Handbook.

1.3.1 The Learning and Teaching Development Unit and school Deputy/Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) support programme teams in the development of assessment strategies through the programme design and approval processes (see also paragraph 1.4.1). Module and programme learning outcomes are collated into assessment maps, to ensure that the overall assessment strategies address them. Programme approval panels scrutinise proposed assessment strategies.

1.3.2 Every year, programme directors ensure that assessments developed by module leaders meet the approved requirements, are balanced, and are appropriately scheduled. Assessment tasks are communicated to students through handbooks and on the virtual learning environment. The University has an exemplar assessment feedback form, though specific tasks may require the development of bespoke feedback sheets. Students met by the review team were satisfied with the assessment information given to them, and confirmed that they received timely and helpful assessment feedback.

1.3.3 The review team found that students receive formative assessment feedback, but practice for this varies significantly in collaborative partnership provision. Students who submit drafts of coursework assignments to their tutors can sometimes do so several times, but in other cases they have only one opportunity to do this, and some have no opportunity at all on an individual basis. The team was told that the University is developing guidance on good practice in formative assessment feedback. The review team **recommends** that by January 2015 the University ensure that policies and guidance for formative assessment feedback include equitable treatment of draft coursework assignments in all taught provision.

1.3.4 Assessment strategies and tasks are monitored and evaluated as part of the annual programme review process, which is informed by examiner feedback. Periodic reviews allow for deeper and more reflective evaluation of the currency and validity of assessments. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit offers a range of staff development opportunities for assessment matters.

### **Setting and maintaining programme standards**

1.4 The Academic Board has ultimate authority over, and responsibility for, academic standards. The University has appropriate processes for programme design, approval and review; these are detailed in the Academic Handbook and overseen by the Quality and Standards Unit (QSU) and the University's Academic Board and its committees (see also paragraph 1.2.2). Each committee has appropriate terms of reference, and exercises authority accordingly to maintain and assure standards. Approval reports and minutes show that the processes work effectively and are reported to Academic Board through its committees.

1.4.1 The University has a sequential process for programme approval which includes initial approval, validation and reporting to the Academic Quality and Standards Board. Senior staff, including the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, chair approval events, and all panels include internal academics, external academics, and industry professionals where appropriate. Students are full panel members for the validation and review of on-campus and, wherever possible, for collaborative programmes. Approval panel members, including students, receive comprehensive training for their roles. The same processes are used for collaborative provision in both franchised and validated models, and the Learning and Teaching Development Unit, Deputy/Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching), and moderators or link tutors (see also paragraphs 2.11.17-2.11.18) provide support, especially for programme teams developing validated programmes. Short courses which are part of a 'parent' programme are approved with that programme, but where credit is awarded for a freestanding short course, or for a short course that has been aligned with a 'parent' programme after the point of validation, this is considered by the Credit Committee, which makes recommendations to the Academic Quality and Standards Board.

1.4.2 The University's processes for annual programme review and periodic review are central to the maintenance of academic standards on the programme. School Directors of Learning and Teaching analyse annual programme reviews and examiner reports and identify strengths and issues for action by programme teams and school committees, and their reports ultimately reach the Academic Board. Individual programmes or programme clusters have a more extensive periodic review at five-year intervals, to assure the continuing relevance and validity of programmes. In collaborative provision, franchised programmes are usually reviewed alongside the 'home' programme, while for validated programmes the review normally coincides with the partner review process.

1.4.3 The Academic Handbook comprehensively sets out policies and practice for programme design, approval, monitoring and review. The review team found evidence that

all these processes work as stated in the Academic Handbook, and are well understood by those involved.

1.4.4 The transition process involved in the withdrawal from the University of Wales has been carefully managed by the University. Appropriate standards have been assured for the minority of students who will complete with University of Wales awards.

### **Subject benchmarks**

1.5 The University takes appropriate account of subject and qualification benchmark statements, and ensures that these are used in its programme design, approval, and review processes to inform the setting of academic standards. The Academic Handbook details the references which should be made to subject benchmark statements in programme design, and the Learning and Teaching Development Unit and Deputy/Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) provide any necessary advice to programme teams.

1.5.1 Programme approval requires the production of a programme specification, which records the relevant subject benchmark statement and any other relevant external frames of reference such as professional body requirements. Modules must be mapped to subject benchmark statements to demonstrate appropriate alignment. This mapping is scrutinised by validation panels, and the validation report template requires the panel to confirm that subject benchmark statements have been suitably considered. The annual programme review process requires programme teams to confirm that the programme continues to be aligned to current subject benchmark statements. The review team found evidence that all these processes worked effectively.

## **2 Quality of learning opportunities**

### **Outcome**

The quality of student learning opportunities at the University **meets** UK expectations. The review team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

### **Professional standards for teaching and learning**

2.1 The University supports professional standards for teaching and support of learning. Its Strategic Plan 2012-17 commits the institution to extending professional standards and scholarship, and it has set targets for Higher Education Academy (HEA) recognition and numbers of staff holding research degrees. Central to achieving these objectives are the University's Human Resources Strategy, its school plans, and the work of the Learning and Teaching Development Unit.

2.1.1 Academic staff selection includes, where appropriate, a requirement for relevant professional qualifications and experience. Candidates are required to demonstrate their aptitude for teaching through a presentation. Appointment panels are able to specify a requirement to gain HEA recognition or a further qualification as part of an offer of employment. Staff who do not have a formal teaching qualification, or who have insufficient experience of teaching in higher education, are required to take the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education. New staff are inducted at University and school level, and mentoring is provided. During the probationary period, teaching is observed by a senior member of staff. The Peer Review and Development Scheme for observation of teaching has recently been refreshed and relaunched in order to increase staff engagement, which will be monitored through the revised annual staff performance review scheme.

2.1.2 There is a formal process for appointment of staff to roles such as programme director or partner link tutor; new appointees are trained for these roles and, where possible, shadow those already in post. Training, some of it mandatory, is also available for specific duties such as research supervision and for those involved in assessing work-based learning. Training and support is given to update staff with current University practice, and to facilitate change such as the migration of the virtual learning environment to a new platform. Workloads are adjusted to facilitate staff development, for example those undertaking higher degrees, or undertaking research. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit provides an extensive programme of training and development opportunities for staff (see also paragraphs 2.1.4 and 2.2.1). Its continuing professional development (CPD) scheme is mapped to the UK Professional Standards Framework to facilitate the award of HEA fellowship to staff who teach or support learning. Staff who met the review team spoke very positively about the support and development opportunities available to them.

2.1.3 The University is currently approving a new research strategy, which includes a commitment to research that contributes to the development and delivery of high-quality, relevant learning programmes. To facilitate integration between research and teaching, the Learning and Teaching Board and the Research and Enterprise Board meet together annually, and this meeting is being replicated at school level. Research-informed teaching is considered during programme validation and is commented on in annual programme review. Support is available for staff to raise their research profile by studying for higher research degrees and attending conferences.

2.1.4 The University approves all staff teaching in its collaborative provision, initially at programme validation and subsequently as required. It also provides development to partnership staff: for example, an annual partner training event is held in Cardiff, and new learning and teaching support modules are hosted on the Learning and Teaching Development Unit website which will help partner staff to apply for HEA fellowship. Link tutors and moderators provide staff development at partner institutions, particularly in relation to teaching and assessment. The University is developing a scheme through which its senior staff observe teaching in partner institutions. Staff in partner institutions who met the review team spoke positively about the staff development opportunities and support provided by the University.

## **Learning resources**

2.2 The University's learning resources are appropriate to allow students to achieve the learning outcomes of their programme. It has strategies, policies and procedures to ensure that staff are able to deliver the University's learning and teaching strategy and its learning programmes (see also paragraphs 2.1-2.1.4). The University has Investors in People accreditation. Performance review is embodied in probationary arrangements for new staff and in annual staff performance review, which is currently being revised to link more closely with the HEA's Professional Standards Framework. Other key management systems, such as the workload allocation model, and standardised staff CVs, have been revised in order to manage and monitor performance in relation to the Strategic Plan.

2.2.1 Staff confirm that the University provides an extensive programme of training and development opportunities (see also paragraph 2.1.2). Staff development needs are determined centrally using input from staff performance review, student feedback, and quality assurance processes. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit provides development through face-to-face events, e-learning, and coaching. In addition to its high quality web resources it provides customised training and development for departments and groups in areas such as blended and technology-enhanced learning (see also paragraph 2.12.1). The work of the Learning and Teaching Development Unit in providing a

comprehensive range of opportunities and resources for enhancement of learning and teaching is **good practice**.

2.2.2 Learning resource requirements of programmes are considered at validation and in annual programme review and periodic review. The University has invested in rationalising and modernising its estate onto two main campuses. The Learning and Teaching Resource team liaises with the Learning and Teaching Development Unit, schools, the Estates department and the Disability Service to ensure that teaching accommodation is fit for purpose, able to facilitate new ways of teaching and learning, and as fully accessible as possible.

2.2.3 The Learning Portal provides electronic access to information and resources including the library, IT, and academic skills development. Physical access to library and IT facilities is through three learning centres, one on each campus. Electronic services can be widely accessed through wireless and mobile technology. The virtual learning environment is currently being upgraded through a move to a new platform. The University provides extensive training and support to staff and students to assist in using its varied learning resources. Student feedback is used to help plan new resources and enhance existing services.

2.2.4 Learning resources for students in collaborative provision are assessed on site at initial approval, kept under review by link tutors' and moderators' visits, and are formally reviewed at periodic review. Collaborative provision students have access to University learning resources, and additional support has been put in place for this. An online English study skills support module has been developed for students in collaborative partnerships.

2.2.5 The University's Welsh Language Scheme sets out its strategy for external communication and the development and support of Welsh medium teaching, and the creation of centres of excellence for this. There is a Welsh Language Unit and each school has a Welsh language coordinator, and increasing numbers of students are taking modules in Welsh. The student submission noted the libraries' lack of books in Welsh in some areas, but staff expressed a view that in part this reflected a lack of material produced in Welsh. The University is a member of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol which promotes Welsh-medium teaching through student scholarships, funded projects and provision of teaching and learning resources. The University is working with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to increase Welsh-medium resources, for example through translation of key textbooks.

2.2.6 The review team met students studying on taught and research degrees at both the University's home campus and at partner institutions. Students indicated that the staff that taught them are knowledgeable and professional. The learning resources provided meet their needs and they have appropriate support for using them. Research students commented positively about the workspace allocated to them and the access they have to specialist equipment and software.

## **Student voice**

2.3 The University takes deliberate steps to engage students in the quality assurance and enhancement of their experience. There is a close working relationship between the University and the Students' Union with a shared focus on the enhancement of the student experience. Students' Union sabbatical officers work closely with the senior management team and attend key institutional decision-making committees. Student representation is strong and well supported at institutional level. A comprehensive system of undergraduate and postgraduate student representation is in place at programme, department and school levels, with strong links with the Students' Union. The Students' Union provides training for all representatives, and further information about their role is provided on the Students'

Union website and in programme handbooks. Postgraduate research students are represented through the Academic Associate Committee, whose student chair (and/or nominee) is a member of institutional research committees. Students clearly understand these layers and channels of representation and confirm that they are appropriate and effective, and representatives feel that they are well prepared for their roles.

2.3.1 These arrangements for student representation are replicated at collaborative partner institutions. Students confirmed that they also have opportunities to meet link tutors and other University representatives who visit partner institutions, and are consulted during periodic reviews. Students' Union sabbatical officers have made a number of visits to international partner institutions in 2012 and 2013 to enhance links. In 2013 it led a training event in the University for student representatives from collaborative partnerships. Students from a range of UK-based and overseas partner institutions attended and were encouraged to train other representatives at their own locations. Students who had attended this event confirmed that it had strengthened their understanding of the student representative role, and their links with the University. The Students' Union's engagement with students in collaborative partnerships to enhance the quality of representation, is **good practice**.

2.3.2 Students have opportunities to give feedback on all modules and programmes, on campus and in partnerships, through questionnaire surveys and informal contacts with staff. They learn about responses to their feedback in a variety of ways, including the posting of committee minutes, newsletters and through their student representatives. The students that the team met felt that the University was responsive to feedback and valued their views.

2.3.3 Students are full panel members for the validation and review of on-campus and, wherever possible, for collaborative programmes. The University and Students' Union collaborate to train a pool of student reviewers at the start of each academic year. Student and staff members of review panels confirmed that the student contribution is valued, and student reviewers said that they are well prepared for the role.

2.3.4 There is clear evidence that the University uses results of the National Student Survey (NSS) for enhancement with a well-defined process for consideration of NSS results and action planning at programme and institutional level. The Students' Union is involved in the University's processes for NSS action planning, and NSS data is discussed with student representatives and as part of the annual programme review.

2.3.5 The Students' Union evaluates the representation system annually and regularly introduces enhancements to the system. It reports the annual evaluation to the University so that the system can be monitored and developed collaboratively.

## **Management information is used to improve quality and standards**

2.4 The University makes effective use of management information to safeguard quality and standards and to promote enhancement of student learning opportunities. Its Information Strategy sets out to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of information systems, and it has invested in a new student records system. However, it recognises that across the University, data remains fragmented and has embarked on systems integration projects. A business intelligence system is currently being developed. Enhancements in progress include the integration of research student records into the Student System, facilitating cross-school reporting, and the acquisition of new software to hold data related to placements and careers (see also paragraph 2.13.2).

2.4.1 Information generated both internally and externally is used effectively in decision-making. NSS data is widely used to shape enhancements of the student experience (see also paragraph 2.3.4). The annual Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey is used to inform careers and other student services. A new system for storing data about

disclosed disabilities integrates data across the institution and is used to identify needs for special teaching, learning and assessment arrangements. Data from the student record system is used to inform annual programme review about student recruitment, progression and completion on all programmes including collaborative provision. A recent review of information used in annual programme review recommended realigning the statistics used in these reports with those used by the central Portfolio Development Group to monitor key metrics related to programme performance.

2.4.2 The University's key performance indicators provide a framework against which the performances of schools and services are monitored, and which are reported annually to the Board of Governors. This reporting takes account of risk and also benchmarks the University's performance against Welsh, regional and reputational comparators. The University collects data on all its home-campus and collaborative provision so that performances of students on similar programmes at different locations can be compared at school and institutional levels.

## **Admission to the University**

2.5 The University's policies and procedures used to admit students are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied. The admissions policy is published on the website and applies to all applications for all provision, including programmes offered at partner institutions. Admissions procedures are undertaken by different groups of staff depending on the applicant's origins and the programme applied for. The central Admissions Unit is responsible for the admission of all UK and other European Union (EU) students to taught and research programmes; the International Office is responsible for the admission of international students; and the Collaborative Provision Office oversees admission to the University's provision at partner institutions. Entry requirements are agreed at programme approval and reviewed during periodic review. They are defined in programme specifications, details from which are published in prospectuses and on the website. The University believes that the clarity of its admissions requirements plays a key role in ensuring that consistent decisions are made by the various teams responsible for admissions.

2.5.1 Admissions procedures are documented in the Academic Handbook and the Collaborative Provision Handbook, both of which are available electronically. The Staff Portal contains extensive guidance and resources for staff involved in the admissions process. Briefing and training events are provided for staff involved in admissions, including those in partner institutions. Applicants for research degrees are interviewed by the relevant department which advises on whether the candidate should be admitted. Adjustments are made to relevant aspects of the admissions process, such as interviews, for students who have notified a disability. The Staff Portal contains extensive guidance and resources for staff involved in the admissions process.

2.5.2 Some admissions decision-making may be devolved, where, for example, they may depend on interviews or tests carried out locally. Where decisions are devolved, they are made by programme directors and tutors and forwarded to the central Admissions Unit. In collaborative provision the extent of delegation in relation to admissions depends on the partner's location and status. Collaborative partner institutions may be responsible for marketing, collecting applications, checking qualifications and sharing applications with the University. Moderators and link tutors are responsible for checking that agreed admissions processes are followed. The admission of all research students to partner institutions is undertaken by the University although interviews may be carried out locally. Staff in partner institutions who met the review team are clear about their responsibilities within the admissions process.

2.5.3 Decisions to admit students with credit and advanced standing through accredited prior learning, including prior experiential learning, outside articulation arrangements (see also paragraphs 2.11.14-2.11.16), are made on an individual basis by programme directors following guidance in the Academic Handbook and in the University's assessment regulations. Marketing materials and programme documentation indicate that these admission arrangements are available.

2.5.4 The University promotes recruitment through open days and outreach activity, and provides extensive information on the website. Separate web pages provide information for those applying to partner institutions. Some information is available in Welsh. Students confirm that they had received accurate and helpful information prior to joining their programme and considered the admissions process to be fair and efficient. The University also uses agents, particularly to recruit international students. It keeps a register of recognised agents and monitors them closely to ensure that the University is appropriately represented and potential students treated fairly. Unsuccessful applicants can request feedback from the University's Admissions Unit, and may request a review of an admissions decision. Students who met the review team confirmed that they received accurate and helpful information prior to joining their programme and considered the admissions process to be fair and efficient.

2.5.5 Students who are offered and accept places are provided with detailed information about registration and what to expect on their chosen programme. They all attend welcoming and induction events, and students who met the review team said that these events had been helpful in making the transition to studying at the University.

2.5.6 The University regularly monitors, reviews and revises its admissions requirements, procedures and performance. Recruitment and admissions data are considered annually through the annual programme review process. New students are surveyed about their experience of the admissions process, and their responses feed into an annual Student Recruitment Activity Report which proposes improvements where necessary.

## **Complaints and appeals**

2.6 The University has effective policies and procedures in place for students to appeal or complain. They are approved by the Academic Board and set out in the Academic Handbook and on the website, and are summarised in the Student Handbook. Appeals processes apply to all University provision, on its own campuses and in partnerships, and include procedures for appealing against decisions of examination boards and postgraduate research examiners. Complaints procedures apply differently in campus-based and collaborative provision. Advice to appellants is available from the Students' Union, the Registry, and (for appellants who have declared a disability) the Disability Service.

2.6.1 The student submission noted that many students were not aware of appeals and complaints procedures or how to access them. Some information provided to students was also out of date. This was brought to the attention of the University and both the University and the Students' Union are taking action to address the issue. Students who met the review team indicated that they are aware of the processes for appeals and complaints and know where to find out further detail should the need arise.

2.6.2 The Assistant Registrar (Regulations and Research) reports annually to the Academic Board on the appeals received in the previous academic year, and proposes operational improvements. Recent improvements have included the production of a leaflet on mitigating circumstances in order to reduce the number of ineligible appeals. The review team was informed that future reports will distinguish between appeals by 'home-campus' students and those in collaborative provision, so that comparisons can be made.

2.6.3 The University's policies and procedures for complaints by home-campus students begin with an informal stage and continue if necessary into a formal process managed by the Registry's Complaints Officer who works closely with the Dean of Students. Training is provided for staff involved. Complainants are asked for feedback on the process to assist enhancement. The Director of Student and Registry Services reports annually to the Academic Board and the Board of Governors on student complaints. The report includes recommendations for action. It covers complaints from home-campus and collaborative provision, but in the latter case it reports only complaints received by the University, not those complaints received only by partner institutions. The number of complaints to the University from collaborative provision has risen in recent years, leading to a review by the Registry and remedial actions to address issues identified.

2.6.4 In collaborative provision the handling of complaints in the first instance is delegated to partner institutions. The 2013 QAA Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales at Cardiff Metropolitan University found evidence of confusion about whether the University's or the partner's regulations should apply to the handling of complaints and appeals, and recommended that this be clarified. In response, the University's Collaborative Provision Office has produced a guide for students in collaborative provision which includes information about appeals and complaints. Regarding complaints, this guide states that once informal processes have been exhausted, a student should follow the partner's formal procedures, details of which should be available in programme handbooks. Only after these processes have been exhausted can the student complain to the University. The University provides partners with a standard paragraph to insert in students' programme handbooks regarding complaints, and space to insert details of local procedures. However, examples of handbooks seen by the review team did not contain appropriate information on local procedures, and provided students with advice that was confusing. This lack of clarity had not apparently been picked up by link tutors and moderators in checking programme handbooks.

2.6.5 The Academic Handbook comments that it is not straightforward to determine how complaints should be progressed in collaborative provision. It states that the University will seek to intervene in the handling of complaints that have an academic dimension or where the partner is alleged to have acted inappropriately. However, the review team was also told that partners are not required to report all complaints made through their internal mechanisms, so it is not clear how the University would know whether it should intervene. It is also unclear how local procedures for handling complaints are scrutinised, approved and monitored. The team **recommends** that by January 2015 the University review and clarify complaints procedures for collaborative provision and ensure that these are consistently and accurately communicated to students.

## **Career advice and guidance**

2.7 The University's approach to career education, information, advice and guidance is adequately quality assured. Careers advice and guidance are embedded within the University Employability Strategy, which is central to the University's mission. (Other matters relevant to the Employability Strategy are discussed in paragraphs 2.13-2.13.3.) The Employability Strategy and action plan is mapped against *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others* of the Quality Code to ensure that its expectation is met for work-based learning and overseas placements, and sets out current practice and objectives for careers and employability. Reports from the Careers Development Service are used by key committees to monitor participation and graduate destinations.

2.7.1 A comprehensive programme of careers support for on-campus students is delivered through one-to-one appointments, workshops and drop-in sessions. The Careers Development Service also works with a range of employers to deliver careers fairs,

workshops and presentations, and links relevant employers with contacts in schools to encourage employers to offer placements and work-tasters. The Students' Union runs a job shop and brings external consultants into the University to run employability and bespoke training sessions. Students consider that careers advice and guidance are of a high standard.

2.7.2 The Careers Development Service and the Learning and Teaching Development Unit assist programme teams to embed employability and graduate attributes into the curriculum, and workshops are provided for staff as part of the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education (see also paragraph 2.13.3).

2.7.3 The Your Career online learning object provides interactive careers resources which students undertake in their own time, or as part of a credit-bearing module, in order to prepare for their future careers. This resource can be accessed by all students including those who are disabled, part-time, or in collaborative provision. Students have used it in a variety of ways: for example, at one international partnership centre it supported weekly face-to-face personal development sessions. Blended learning careers modules, available in some on-campus programmes, are supported by tailored versions of Your Career. The Your Career online learning object, which supplies careers advice and a flexible learning instrument for careers development modules, is **good practice**.

## Supporting disabled students

2.8 The University appropriately manages learning opportunities to meet the needs of disabled students, and maintains a strategic commitment to equality and diversity. Information for prospective students is available on the Disability Services website and on Open Days. Prospective students are encouraged to contact the Disability Service as early as possible in the application process, and reminders are sent to those who have disclosed disabilities on their UCAS forms to encourage them to discuss their needs before arrival. Information for current students is given in the Student Handbook and on the Student Portal, and Disability Services is highlighted in the induction for all students. Fitness to Practice requirements are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

2.8.1 A wide range of support is available for disabled students once they have arrived at the University. Disability Services, in collaboration with schools and other student services, proactively encourages students to disclose disabilities if they have not done so before enrolment. They provide in-house disability assessments and personalised support based on individual student needs, through trained advisers and study skills sessions. Students report that disabled students feel well supported, and note the efforts made by the University and the student body to promote inclusive approaches to students with disabilities.

2.8.2 The performance of disabled students is considered annually at programme level and actions planned for any enhancement required. Trends found in annual programme reviews feed into the annual report on Equality and Diversity received by the Board of Governors. The Research Degrees Board monitors and reports on progress of disabled postgraduate research students.

2.8.3 Equality and Diversity training is provided by Disability Services to all staff at induction, in the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education, and through workshops and online advice in association with the Learning and Teaching Development Unit. A Disability Customer Relations Management module, currently being piloted, will give staff access to information so that they can support specific student needs. Disability Services works with programme teams to advise about reasonable adjustments to learning, teaching and assessment, and these are monitored through regular meetings with

students and staff. Learning Support workers provide individual support to eligible students. Staff receive bespoke training and support in more complex cases.

2.8.4 The Estates department ensures that all new buildings and refurbishments are accessible; it takes account of the diversity of users and makes regular improvements to existing buildings. The Your Career learning object (see also paragraph 2.7.3) provides disabled students with access to a careers module in their own time. The Career Development Service and Disability Services work together to support disabled students with careers appointments across campuses to ensure that they can access the support available.

## **Supporting international students**

2.9 The quality of learning opportunities for international students is appropriate. The International Office provides particular support for international students including welfare and immigration advice, induction, and orientation. Detailed information for international students on all these matters, and on study skills, is given on the website and in the Student Handbook; it is clear and avoids technical language.

2.9.1 The International Office oversees international student admissions and ensures that they are consistent with the requirements for other students and include the additional requirements of the Home Office. It offers a welcome, airport pick-up and accommodation booking service. Students are met at the airport by an international adviser and trained student volunteers. An induction weekend covers a range of matters, including healthcare and setting up bank accounts. Continued support is offered through study skills workshops and English language support throughout the students' programmes of study.

2.9.2 Training on internationalisation is included as part of the corporate induction for all new staff, and additional, optional training is provided for academic staff by the Learning and Teaching Development Unit.

2.9.3 The University runs the International Student Barometer annually to get feedback from international students, and this identifies good practice and areas for future development. A report on the work of the International Office and results of the International Student Barometer is included in the annual Equality and Diversity report to the Board of Governors.

## **Supporting postgraduate research students**

2.10 The University provides appropriate support and guidance for postgraduate research students at institutional and school levels. It believes that the professional interactions which students develop with their Directors of Study are a particularly significant feature of this support and guidance.

2.10.1 The Research Development Committee oversees the standards and quality of postgraduate research programmes. It receives annual Graduate Studies reports from schools and partner institutions, and reports to the Research and Enterprise Board. The University is developing a revised Research Strategy for 2014-19 to align more closely with the Corporate Strategic Plan and to renew an emphasis on strengthening the University's research environment.

2.10.2 Significant investments have been made in the development and provision of specialist research facilities and resources in each of the schools and across the University's main campuses. Research Centres associated with schools provide the framework for the University's research infrastructure alongside support for strategic liaison with higher education partners and external research institutes. The 2013 Postgraduate Research

Experience Survey identified a need for improvement of the postgraduate research environment, and this is being addressed through the revised Research Strategy, associated school-based action-planning, and promotion of cross-school collaborations, some of which are initiated through postgraduate research student interactions.

2.10.3 The University's approach to admissions, enrolment, and transfer from MPhil to PhD is clear and effective. Applications are considered by a Graduate Studies Coordinator in each school, and subsequently the University's Director of Research and Graduate Studies. Once a student has been accepted, a Director of Studies is identified to lead the student's supervisory team. This approach is mirrored in partner institutions to ensure parity of research degree arrangements. Some aspects of the student admission and induction process, and the students' learning experiences, may vary at school level according to the academic needs of each student and their programme. All students receive the Postgraduate Researcher Handbook, which is complemented by guidance on the Research and Enterprise Services website.

2.10.4 The Research Development Committee maintains a register of Directors of Studies and research supervisors and University guidelines define the supervisory workload. Supervisory capacity in the University has increased, but the availability of experienced supervisors varies across schools, and well-qualified external supervisors are employed in a partner institution as its engagement in research degrees develops. Training and mentoring is provided for all supervisors. Students have a clear understanding of their supervisory entitlements and the process of transferring from an MPhil to a PhD. Each student's progress is monitored through supervisory meetings and completion of an annual monitoring report; this is reviewed at school level by a Graduate Studies Coordinator, and outcomes are reported through the Research Development Committee to the Research and Enterprise Board.

2.10.5 The Research Development Committee appoints external examiners, following nominations or recommendations by Directors of Studies and Graduate Studies Coordinators in each school. The Academic Registry coordinates the examining process.

2.10.6 The review team found that the development of research and transferable skills for postgraduate research students varies across schools and is not consistent with the process described in the Postgraduate Researcher Handbook. The development and auditing of research skills is monitored by supervisors and supported by opportunities for students to engage with a range of workshops within an annual Postgraduate Researcher Skills Week. The Postgraduate Researcher Handbook specifies a formal and compulsory research methods training programme but this is not systematically available across the University.

2.10.7 Formal and informal communication channels are used to ensure that postgraduate research students have a representative voice. Academic Associates nominated from each school provide appropriate and effective representation through the Academic Associates Committee. The students' annual monitoring reports (see also paragraph 2.10.4) provide a more formal mechanism for feedback to the school and University's Director of Research and Graduate Studies. Postgraduate research students express a high level of satisfaction with the general and specialist learning resources available to them, and with the academic and pastoral support they received. Suitable work-spaces are available for full-time and part-time research students. An annual Research Symposium provides a showcase for postgraduate research, and students have opportunities to submit their research for publication in the University's research journal.

2.10.8 Postgraduate research students who teach and assess undergraduates are trained, supported and monitored unsystematically at school level, mainly through shadowing and being mentored by academic staff. There is no compulsory requirement for postgraduate

research students who teach, to take the more formalised training opportunities and qualifications which are available in the University. The review team **recommends** that by March 2015 the University apply a consistent University-wide approach to the training, support and monitoring of postgraduate research students engaged in teaching and assessment.

### **Learning delivered through collaborative arrangements**

2.11 The quality of learning opportunities delivered as part of collaborative arrangements is generally managed effectively to enable students to achieve their awards. The University defines three models of collaborative provision: franchised programmes (initially validated for delivery at the University and subsequently delivered by a partner); validated programmes (developed by a partner and approved by the University); and outreach franchise (franchise programmes delivered partly or wholly by University staff). Articulation arrangements are defined as arrangements under which students completing external programmes may automatically progress to University degree programmes with advanced standing. One of the University's collaborative partners is currently designated an 'Associate College'. The University maintains records, by type and category, of all partnerships that are subject to a formal agreement. All overseas collaborative provision is taught and assessed in English.

2.11.1 The Collaborative Provision Strategy sets out key principles for the management of partnerships, including central oversight, use of University procedures, and regular review of academic and financial viability. The Board of Governors' Transnational Education (TNE) Subcommittee oversees risks associated with TNE and reports to the Board's Strategic Planning and Performance Committee. The University's policy on collaborative provision articulates the basis upon which the University enters into collaborative arrangements, including benefits to students and to the University and the assurance of quality and standards. The policy, together with collaborative principles and procedures, is contained in the Academic Handbook. The Collaborative Provision Handbook provides key information to partners and University staff on the management, monitoring and review of collaborative provision. Useful online information for partner staff is accessible on the University's collaborative provision SharePoint site.

2.11.2 The University is addressing the outcomes of the 2013 Estyn report on the South East Wales Centre for Teacher Education and Training, which incorporates an element of provision at the University, and is making satisfactory progress towards completion of actions arising from the recommendations of the QAA report on the Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales at Cardiff Metropolitan University (February 2013).

2.11.3 The University has clearly documented procedures for the approval of proposed partners. An initial vetting visit is conducted by staff approved for this purpose by the Vice-Chancellor's Board. For collaborations involving delivery at multiple campuses, the initial visit must, where possible, include all campuses. Due diligence checks are made, and proposals deemed to be high risk are not progressed. The review team considers that these procedures provide adequate safeguards against financial impropriety or conflicts of interest that might compromise academic standards or the quality of learning opportunities.

2.11.4 The University has a formal schedule of periodic due diligence checks of all its current overseas collaborative partners, through to 2016-17. Risk matrices for each partnership, updated annually by the Collaborative Provision Office, are considered by the TNE Subcommittee and as part of Annual Partnership Review. An overall risk scorecard for all partnerships is also scrutinised at Annual Partnership Review. The review team saw evidence that issues are identified and addressed through this process.

2.11.5 The University has developed an exit strategy to be used when a partnership is being discontinued. There was evidence that this is implemented effectively and appropriate measures are applied to maintain standards and the quality of the student experience.

2.11.6 The University requires a Memorandum of Programme Agreement and a Memorandum of Financial Agreement to be completed for each collaborative programme. The agreements, which have a specified term, must be signed by the Vice-Chancellor or their nominee and the head of the collaborating institution. In addition, the University has now put in place for each partnership an overarching Agreement for Collaboration governing the interpretation and performance of the other agreements. Both the Agreement for Collaboration and the Programme Agreement state that responsibility for oversight and maintenance of academic standards rests with the University and that the quality assurance procedures of the University apply; they also prohibit serial franchising. The Agreement for Collaboration covers changes to regulatory frameworks, approval of partner published materials and intellectual property. The programme and financial memoranda detail the respective partners' responsibilities, in clear and comprehensive provisions. The review team found that in one overseas partnership, while the Memorandum of Programme Agreement was in place before students were enrolled, the Agreement for Academic Collaboration was not completed at that stage. Two articulation agreements, viewed by the review team, which cover articulated programmes on which students are currently enrolled, had not been signed by the partner institution. The review team **recommends** that the University ensure that all collaborative and articulation arrangements are covered by completed, signed and current inter-institutional agreements.

2.11.7 The Academic Board maintains an overview of the quality and standards of the University's collaborative provision, receiving reports and minutes from the Academic Quality and Standards Board. The latter is informed of the quality and standards in collaborative provision through receipt of reports and minutes from the Collaborative Provision Committee.

2.11.8 Approval, monitoring and periodic review follow the University's standard procedures (see also paragraphs 1.4-1.4.3), with some additions reflecting the particular nature of collaborative provision. Following the initial vetting of a partner and approval to proceed, the precise format of the programme approval event, based on the standard procedure, is determined by the Academic Quality and Standards Board. Approval panels include at least one external subject specialist. For overseas events, panel chairs and at least one panel member must have been trained for this purpose. Visits must be carried out at all proposed delivery sites. The Academic Quality and Standards Board receives the reports of events for approval. The review team found that the programme approval procedures are being implemented effectively. Procedures for the approval of proposed additional campuses of existing partners, which include a panel visit to all such campuses, are also effective, and there are robust and effective processes for the franchise of research degree provision. Partner staff value the high level of support provided by the University leading up to approval events.

2.11.9 Annual programme reviews are scrutinised by link tutors/moderators, the Collaborative Provision Office and the associated school Learning and Teaching Committees. Annual programme review summaries (by school), and an annual overview (by partner), are considered by the Academic Quality and Standards Board and the Learning and Teaching Board. Reports and summaries are analytical and evaluative; they identify key strengths and good practice, and matters for improvement. They also include action plans, but not reports on actions completed or still in progress from the previous year. The University may wish to consider how this aspect of annual summary reporting might be introduced. Quality management arrangements for postgraduate research students at one of the University's collaborative partners (the only one delivering provision at this level) follow the arrangements for university-based students (see also paragraphs 2.10-2.10.8).

2.11.10 The Annual Partnership Review process, led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International), considers standards, quality and financial matters for each partner institution with respect to individual partners, across the totality of provision leading to the University's awards. This review process works effectively and issues arising are monitored and addressed.

2.11.11 All collaborative programmes undergo periodic review every five years, following the University's standard procedures. Panels, including an external academic member, meet students, programme teams and managers at partner institutions. Franchised programmes may be reviewed as part of the programme at the University, through a video link, or on their own through a visit. The review team found that this review process is generally implemented in accordance with University requirements, for franchised and validated programmes. However, the report of a periodic programme review event for an overseas franchise appeared to indicate that, while the panel met students based at the University, it did not include a meeting with students based overseas. In the light of its clear commitment to student engagement, the University may wish to consider how students based overseas might be more actively involved in periodic programme review.

2.11.12 University procedures require institutional review of partnerships, normally every five years. A review event is conducted at the partner institution by a panel including an external member with collaborative provision experience and a trained and experienced member of University staff not previously involved with the partner. The panel meets managers, staff and students and scrutinises standard sets of partner and University documentation. Partnership review reports show that the University's processes are followed, and are effective. In one case the process was used to ensure robust monitoring of action taken in response to identified quality concerns at an overseas partner institution. In another case, while the panel felt able to take account of students' views through reports from link tutors and other staff who had visited this overseas partner, the panel did not meet students based overseas. Here also (see also paragraph 2.11.11) the University may wish to consider how overseas campus students might be more actively involved in partnership review.

2.11.13 A procedure for addressing serious quality concerns at a partner has been in place since 2012-13. The review team found that this procedure had been invoked once, following serious concerns raised by an external examiner, and implemented effectively, so that the partnership was able to continue.

2.11.14 Articulation arrangements are approved through a visit to the external organisation, and scrutiny of programme documentation to confirm its match with the University 'target' programme. Scrutiny includes mapping of module outcomes and content, assessment processes and materials, entry requirements, quality assurance procedures and details of resources. The visit requirement may be waived where, for example, a target qualification is awarded by an Ofqual-approved body. Where the articulation application is part of a franchise/validation proposal, the articulation process may be incorporated into the franchise/validation process. Academic Board's approval of the arrangement must be obtained before the Memorandum of Articulation is completed.

2.11.15 Articulated programme approval documents seen by the review team do not always show that scrutiny of documents had addressed all the matters set out in the University's procedures (see also paragraph 2.11.14). The team also found that the approval process for student progression from two overseas higher education institutions, and the approval documentation, were unclear. It is not clear on what basis, or if at all, the University had approved articulation arrangements for certain programmes offered by these two institutions. An approval report for franchised and articulated provision at one of the University's partners appeared to have included 'articulation' arrangements in relation to the two third-party

institutions. However, the team was told that students completing the relevant credits at the two institutions in question are not entitled to automatic progression to the University 'target' programme (as would be expected in an articulation arrangement), but applications are considered on a case-by-case basis. The University also stated that it has no formal written agreements with the two institutions in question, and that no students have progressed on the basis of these imprecisely defined arrangements. The review team **recommends** that the University ensure the clarity of its formal documentation with regard to articulation arrangements.

2.11.16 For articulated programmes leading to University programmes delivered off-campus, partners submit an annual critical self-evaluation report to the University, using a standard template. For articulations leading to on-campus programmes, a report in a similar format is prepared by the on-campus programme director and reflected upon in the annual programme review process. These reports are generally informative, covering external examiner reports, student performance data, and student feedback, and are considered by school Learning and Teaching Committees.

2.11.17 Schools are responsible, through their moderators and link tutors, for assuring the standards and quality of collaborative provision. The Cardiff School of Management, which has extensive collaborative provision, appoints a principal and a subsidiary link tutor for each international partner institution. For all other collaborative provision, a moderator is appointed for each individual programme. Moderators and link tutors monitor academic standards and quality of learning opportunities in collaborative programmes and make reports to the University committee structure. They also advise and support partner staff in a wide range of roles including peer observation of teaching and assisting with staff and student induction. Moderators and link tutors receive training and share information through a forum which meets six times each year.

2.11.18 Moderators and link tutors visit partner institutions, normally twice a year, and report to the Collaborative Provision Office, their School Dean, and the partner. Reports typically record meetings with senior staff, programme staff and students, and they confirm that University requirements are being met. The review team also found that CVs of new staff are checked during moderator or link tutor visits. Partner staff described a high level of advice and support from moderators and link tutors, and from other University staff who visit.

2.11.19 In most cases, assessment briefs and examination questions are set by partner staff and approved by the moderator or link tutor and external examiner before issue to students. Marking and second marking are undertaken by partner staff and samples of marked work are moderated by the external examiner. Examination boards are chaired and supported by University staff; they are held at the University or at the partner institution, with video links to partners where necessary. Boards are properly conducted in accordance with University requirements, and external examiners are generally satisfied with the assessment process. Where staff development needs are identified in relation to assessment, action is generally taken to address them. Formative assessment feedback in collaborative provision is addressed in paragraph 1.3.3.

2.11.20 External examiners for collaborative provision are appointed by the University. Where possible, there is commonality of external examiners for individual programmes, across home and collaborative provision. University staff stated that, where this is not possible, schools seek to facilitate liaison between external examiners. External examiner reports are specific to individual partner programmes and, in some cases, to partner campuses. University staff confirmed that marked scripts available to external examiners are clearly identified by campus, allowing external examiner reports to distinguish between campuses. Responses to external examiners' reports are prepared by partners and sent to the examiners by the University.

2.11.21 The Collaborative Provision Committee receives external examiners' reports and responses for collaborative provision. Overview reports are sent to the Academic Quality and Standards Board. School Directors of Learning and Teaching also prepare summaries of external examiner reports for collaborative programmes, for consideration by school Learning and Teaching Committees, the Learning and Teaching Board, and the Academic Quality and Standards Board. These summaries are generally full and evaluative, with records of action to be taken. However, this system of summary reporting does not appear to require reporting on actions completed or still in progress from the previous year, and the University may wish to consider how this aspect of annual summary reporting might be introduced.

2.11.22 The review team found that external examiners receive appropriate responses to their reports and are generally satisfied that appropriate action is taken to address any issues identified. It concludes that the University makes effective use of external examiners in collaborative provision.

2.11.23 Students met by the review team confirmed that the University's procedures for representation and feedback, including staff-student meetings, representation on programme committees, and student evaluation of modules and programmes (see also paragraph 2.3.2), work effectively in collaborative provision. Actions taken in response to student feedback included an extension of library opening hours, adjustment of assignment submission deadlines to address student workload, and improved access to online resources.

2.11.24 The University provides a range of staff development facilities for collaborative partners including staff development induction events following programme approval, ongoing staff development at partners through moderators and link tutors, and the annual partnership training event held at the University (see also paragraph 2.1.4). Partnership staff clearly value the development opportunities provided by the University.

2.11.25 Students in collaborative provision confirm that they are provided with a range of helpful information about their programmes and learning opportunities. Much of this information is given at induction, in the University's generic Student Handbook, and in programme handbooks produced by partners in accordance with the University's programme handbook template. These handbooks are generally accurate, though some contain confusing information about student complaints (see also paragraphs 2.6.4-2.6.5). The University has developed a 'Student's Guide to Studying on a Cardiff Metropolitan University Programme at a Partner Institution'. Although students who met the review team did not mention the guide specifically, they clearly understood their relationship with the University.

2.11.26 The University issues award certificates and transcripts. Transcripts record the name of the delivery partner and location of study. Certificates indicate that the location of study and the language of teaching and assessment are set out in the academic transcript. Transcripts for students who have progressed from articulated programmes to level 6 of the University award record incoming credits but not the location of study relating to these credits. The University may wish to consider the content of transcripts, to ensure that they provide all that is needed for a full understanding of a student's achievement.

2.11.27 The University has clear and extensive guidelines and procedures for the preparation and approval of collaborative partners' advertising and publicity materials, and for ensuring the correct use of the University's logo. Collaborative partners must submit marketing materials to the Collaborative Provision Office for approval and sign-off before publication to ensure their accuracy. The Collaborative Provision Office also routinely checks partner websites. Students confirm that the information they received before applying for their programmes was accurate.

## **Flexible, distributed and e-learning**

2.12 The quality of learning opportunities available through flexible, distributed and e-learning provision is effectively managed. These opportunities are quality assured through the University's normal procedures for approval, annual programme review and periodic review. Additional measures are taken to ensure that flexible and technology-enhanced systems are effective and reliable, particularly when they involve links with partner institutions, and that students have access to appropriate programme resources and support mechanisms.

2.12.1 Most programmes that include flexible, distributed and technology-enhanced learning combine attendance at the University with e-learning. The University's programmes are increasingly making use of these blended learning approaches. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit manages and supports the development of blended learning, and the use of technology-enhanced learning systems, through specialist Learning Developers. Its website is a valuable resource displaying media-enhanced learning materials, innovation case studies, and development activities for staff.

2.12.2 Following a recent review the University is changing its virtual learning environment to promote greater compatibility with partner institutions and to extend flexible e-learning capability. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit provides workshop and online support for staff and students making this transition, including guidelines for the development of module sites and a consistent template for module information.

## **Work-based and placement learning**

2.13 The University's programmes increasingly provide opportunities for work-based and/or placement learning. This is fostered by the University's corporate objective to enable all students to have the opportunity to engage in work-based or placement learning. The Employability Strategy emphasises the development of work-based and placement learning, aligned to the requirements of external advisory agencies and regulatory bodies where appropriate, and policy guidelines are given in the Academic Handbook. A recently appointed Quality and Standards Academic Coordinator guides developments in schools, each of which has a member of staff with responsibility for coordinating placement activities. A newly formed Employability Strategy Group oversees all these activities.

2.13.1 The University provides work-based and placement learning opportunities with a range of private, public and voluntary sector partners. Students get information about these opportunities in their programme handbooks. Partner agencies and organisations are required to uphold the expectations of the University in the preparation, provision, support and monitoring of the students' placement experience. Students provide feedback on their placement experiences through programme committees, staff-student liaison committees and module evaluations. They are generally satisfied with their placement expectations and experiences.

2.13.2 Placement tutors and school-based placement coordinators oversee the quality of placements. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit provides training in mentoring and tutoring for academic staff with responsibility for work-based and placement learning experiences. An Employability Portal on the staff website provides helpful resources to support programme-based development of placements and work-based learning. The Centre for Work-Based Learning facilitates links with regional employers and markets short courses for those already in the workplace; however, its role is not made entirely clear on the University's website. The University is in the process of developing a corporate Placement Handbook to provide core guidance on the provision and quality assurance of placement learning. It has recently invested in the development of a specialist placement management

information system to support monitoring and evaluation, and to enable students to map their employability skills development.

2.13.3 The Careers Development Service has an institutional role in overseeing work-based learning and professional experiences, and conducts an annual audit of placement and work-based learning provision. It also provides the valuable Your Career e-learning tool which supplies flexible careers development support and guidance for all students (see also paragraphs 2.7.2-2.7.3).

### Student charter

2.14 The University's Student Charter was developed with the Students' Union and covers all its students, wherever they study. It sets out clearly what they can expect from the University and the Students' Union, and what is expected of the students. The Charter includes signposting to procedures and support services, and its electronic version provides links to policies and services on the University website. It is distributed widely among home-campus and collaborative students through the University website, the Student Handbook and at induction. The University and the Students' Union regularly review the Charter.

## 3 Information about learning opportunities

### Summary

The information about learning opportunities produced by the University **meets UK expectations**. The intended audience finds the information about the learning opportunities offered is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The team's reasons for this conclusion are given below.

3.1 The University's Public Information Handbook provides guidance to staff on the appropriate use, accessibility and development of published information. Much of this information is available on a public-facing website which is managed and reviewed by the Communications and Marketing Department. Additional layers of scrutiny operate at programme, school and services levels, guided by the Public Information Handbook and trained web-authors linked to each school. Marketing and programme information is verified by programme directors and scrutinised by heads of department and deans. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor has ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of published information.

3.2 Moderators or link tutors and Deputy/Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) check the accuracy of information provided by partner institutions and organisations. This is further scrutinised by the Collaborative Provision Office. All appropriate information is made available in English and Welsh language versions, alongside the provision of alternative formats for students who have a disability. Students told the review team that they are satisfied with the accuracy and timeliness of information received from the University. However, the team found confusing information about complaints procedures contained in programme handbooks at some partner institutions (see also paragraphs 2.6.4-2.6.5).

3.3 Prospective UK and international students can access information on programmes, admissions processes and entry requirements, and University support services, through the website. A range of online and media resources are available to give a clear understanding of the experience students can expect. Sources of information available on the University website comply with the Key Information Set (KIS) and Wider Information Set (WIS) required by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). KIS returns are endorsed for publication by the Director of Learning and Teaching in each school; they are checked by the Learning and Teaching Development Unit and regular audits of information are conducted by

the Quality and Standards Unit. Guidance on the development of the KIS and WIS is provided by the Learning and Teaching Development Unit, and the Study With Us section on the website provides helpful and direct programme-based links to the Unistats website for comparative analysis. Once students have accepted a place at the University, the Student Handbook and Student Portal are valuable sources of information on policies, procedures and regulations, as well as guidance on pastoral and financial welfare and extra-curricular student activities available in the University. The student submission noted the importance of ensuring that details of regulations and processes in these information sources are up to date (see also paragraph 2.6.5).

3.4 External examiners' reports are routinely shared with student representatives, through programme committees and annual programme reviews, across the University and within its partner institutions.

## 4 Enhancement of learning opportunities

### Outcome

The enhancement of student learning opportunities at the University **meets** UK expectations. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

4.1 The University's approach to enhancement is focused on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, and is promoted through a range of corporate strategies. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit and Deputy/Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) identify areas for enhancement through the annual programme review and action planning process. The Deputy/Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) identify areas for enhancement through the annual programme review and action planning process, and the Learning and Teaching Development Unit responds to these needs where appropriate. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit also has strategic responsibility for the quality and promotion of learning enhancement activities in the University, including the provision of appropriate staff development, supporting technology-enhanced learning, and ensuring responsiveness to student feedback. It reports progress at strategic level to the Learning and Teaching Board and the Vice-Chancellor's Board, and the University submits an appraisal of its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy's objectives to HEFCW through its annual monitoring report. The University also seeks to embrace a range of external benchmarks within its strategic enhancement activities, including HEFCW's ten-year strategy for enhancing learning and teaching through technology (2007-2017) and its subsequent Building Capacity Programme, and the HEA-led 'Future Directions' programme.

4.2 Dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching-related activities, and curriculum design and review, is promoted through the Learning and Teaching Development Unit website and supported through roadshows, webinars, workshops, posters and publications. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit website is a rich resource for the dissemination and enhancement of learning and teaching initiatives across the University (see also paragraph 2.2.1). The use of 'news bulletins' in some schools supplements the Learning and Teaching Development Unit information, and academic staff are encouraged to engage with national initiatives that recognise excellence in learning and teaching. The University's Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education programme encourages academic staff to develop enhancement initiatives, and the associated Matrix web page contains innovative and informative case studies.

4.3 The University celebrates excellence in teaching through a Student-Led Teaching Fellowship at the University and in one of its UK partnerships. Opportunities for collaborative partners to engage in the University's enhancement activities include the annual partner training event, which has attracted representatives from UK and international partners.

The agenda for this event is often informed by feedback from students, moderators and link tutors, external examiners, and the annual partner survey.

## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to key terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Most terms also have formal 'operational' definitions. More information can be found in the *Handbook for Institutional Review: Wales*, available on our website at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Pages/Information-And-Guidance-Details.aspx?PubID=123](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Pages/Information-And-Guidance-Details.aspx?PubID=123).

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx).

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary).

**academic standards** The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

**credit(s)** A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education programmes of study, expressed as 'numbers of credits' at a specific level.

**enhancement** Taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of **learning opportunities**. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

**feature of good practice** A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

**framework** A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

**framework for higher education qualifications** A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*.

**learning opportunities** The provision made for students' learning, including planned **programmes of study**, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios) and staff development.

**learning outcome** What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

**operational definition** A formal definition of a term, which establishes exactly what QAA means when using it in reports.

**programme (of study)** An approved course of study which provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

**programme specifications** Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of **programmes of study**, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

**public information** Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

**Quality Code** Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

**subject benchmark statement** A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

**threshold academic standard** The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the **subject benchmark statements** and national qualifications frameworks. Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also **academic standard**.

**widening participation** Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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