



QAA

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

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Institutional review

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Preface

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) exists to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education (HE) qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of HE.

To do this QAA carries out reviews of individual HE institutions (universities and colleges of HE). In Wales this process is known as institutional review. QAA operates similar but separate processes in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

The purpose of institutional review

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

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

Judgements

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

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

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

Nationally agreed standards

Institutional review uses a set of nationally agreed reference points, known as the 'Academic Infrastructure', to consider an institution's standards and quality. These are published by QAA and consist of:

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

The review process

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

The main elements of Institutional review are:

- a preliminary visit by QAA to the institution nine months before the review visit
- a self-evaluation document submitted by the institution four months before the review visit
- a written submission by the student representative body, if they have chosen to do so, four months before the review visit
- a detailed briefing visit to the institution by the review team five weeks before the review visit
- the review visit, which lasts five days
- the publication of a report on the review team's judgements and findings 22 weeks after the review visit.

The evidence for the review

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

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

The review team also gathers evidence by focusing on examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work using 'thematic trails'. These trails may focus on how well institutional processes work at local level and across the institution as a whole.

Institutions are required to publish information about the quality and standards of their programmes and awards in a format recommended in document 04/05 *Information on quality and standards in higher education*, published by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

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Summary

Introduction

A team of reviewers from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC) from 10 to 14 March 2008 to carry out an institutional review. The purpose of the review was to provide public information on the quality of the opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards that UWIC offers.

To arrive at its conclusions the review team spoke to members of staff throughout UWIC and to student representatives. It also read a wide range of documents relating to the way UWIC manages the academic aspects of its provision.

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

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

In institutional review both academic standards and academic quality are reviewed.

Outcome of the review

As a result of its investigations, the review team's view of UWIC is that:

- confidence can be placed in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and of the academic standards of the associated awards.

Features of good practice

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

- the mechanisms to bring senior staff together across the institution to promote consistency and contribute towards embedding enhancement
- the introduction and development of an effective system of school representatives to improve communication with, and involvement of, students
- the creation of a community around FE2HE-UWIC to enhance the experience for higher education students in partner colleges.

Recommendations for action

The review team advises the institution to:

- ensure that feedback on assessments is provided to students in a clear, consistent and timely manner
- review and revise the process of annual monitoring of programmes to ensure it is consistently robust and effective

- prioritise the development of new management information systems and associated processes to allow accurate and timely monitoring of student data at all levels
- continue to develop mechanisms that ensure effective institutional oversight of, and consistent practice with respect to, all aspects of collaborative provision
- review and revise the processes through which the ongoing quality and standards of provision accredited by UWIC are assured.

The review team considers it desirable for the institution to:

- develop more consistent approaches to the formal involvement of graduates and employers in the design, validation and review of programmes.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings the review team also investigated the use made by UWIC of the Academic Infrastructure which QAA has developed on behalf of the whole of UK higher education. The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points that help to define both good practice and academic standards. The findings of the review suggest that in general the institution has considered the purposes of the reference points and reflected on its practices. However, the review team identified some particular issues in relation to the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, and the use of the relevant subject benchmark statement on one particular programme.

Main report

Section 1: the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

1 An institutional review of the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC) was undertaken from 10 to 14 March 2008. The purpose of the review was to provide public information on the quality and standards of UWIC's programmes of study which lead to academic awards of the University of Wales.

2 The review was carried out using a process developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in partnership with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). For institutions in Wales it replaces the previous process of continuation audit undertaken by QAA at the request of Universities UK and the Standing Conference of Principals. Institutional review also replaces assessments and engagements relating to the quality and standards of provision at subject level. The former were undertaken by HEFCW and the latter were undertaken by QAA on behalf of HEFCW as part of HEFCW's statutory responsibility for assessing the quality of education that it funds.

3 The review checked the effectiveness of UWIC's procedures for establishing and maintaining the standards of academic awards of the University of Wales; for reviewing and enhancing the quality of programmes of study leading to those awards; and for publishing reliable information.

The institution and its mission

4 The institution now known as UWIC was established in 1976 as South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education by the amalgamation of four colleges. In 1990 it changed its name to Cardiff Institute of Higher Education, and on 1 April 1992 it became a Higher Education Corporation and an Associated Institution of the University of Wales. In 1993 it secured Privy Council approval for taught degree awarding powers. In 1996, UWIC was admitted as a full member to the University of Wales, as a University College. In 2004, UWIC became a Constituent Institution of the University of Wales. In 2007, following a transition period, the University of Wales changed from a federation to a confederation where institutions are 'accredited' by the University of Wales to award its degrees. As an Accredited Institution of the University of Wales, UWIC holds its own taught degree awarding powers in abeyance and, consequently, degree programmes lead to University of Wales awards.

5 At the time of the review, UWIC was operating under the University of Wales devolved model of quality assurance, which means it has full devolved responsibility for quality and standards of taught degrees. UWIC is also working towards obtaining research degree awarding powers. Currently, for research degrees there is a University of Wales appointed assessor who monitors UWIC quality assurance procedures and reports back to the University of Wales.

6 UWIC currently operates from four teaching campuses within the city of Cardiff. The central administration, Cardiff School of Health Sciences and part of the Cardiff School of Art and Design are based at the Llandaff Campus, along with the National Centre for Product Design and Development Research. The Cardiff School of

Education, the Cardiff School of Sport and the UWIC Students' Union are based on the Cyncoed Campus; the Cardiff School of Management is currently based at the Colchester Avenue Campus; and the Cardiff School of Art and Design is based at the Howard Gardens Campus in the city centre.

7 In October 2007, 10,360 students were registered with UWIC, of whom 72.5 per cent were full-time. Seventy-three per cent of students were studying on undergraduate programmes, 23 per cent on taught postgraduate programmes and 2 per cent on research degree programmes. Eighty-seven per cent of students were defined for fees purposes as Home/European Union (EU), and 13 per cent were overseas. UWIC employs 1,100 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 407 full-time equivalent are academic staff, 660 full-time equivalent are support staff, and 33 full-time equivalent are managerial staff.

8 A new school structure was implemented on 1 August 2006 with the purpose of promoting academic coherence and critical mass, and facilitating interdisciplinary developments. There are five schools and a dedicated research and consultancy centre, the National Centre for Product Design and Development Research. The largest is the Cardiff School of Management and the smallest is the Cardiff School of Sport. The other schools are the Cardiff School of Art and Design, Cardiff School of Education and Cardiff School of Health Sciences.

9 Most of UWIC's taught programmes are at undergraduate and taught postgraduate degree level, but there are still some HND/HNC schemes remaining from what was previously a much larger portfolio of sub-degree programmes. UWIC also offers a small number of Foundation Degrees.

Mission statement

10 UWIC's mission is:

'to provide student-centred learning opportunities that are accessible, flexible, inclusive, lifelong and of the highest quality; to provide a culture within which applied research and enterprise will flourish; to develop established and new centres of excellence in professional education, applied research and knowledge transfer; to provide services that meet the needs of Wales and wider communities by working in partnership with city, national and international bodies'.

11 The Corporate Strategic Plan 2007-2011 states that UWIC's strategic aims are:

- to deliver key academic priorities (namely the development and delivery of high quality learning, teaching and assessment; the development and cohering of the research culture; the development of a vibrant postgraduate community; review and reform of the academic portfolio
- to improve the match between staff capabilities and organisational needs
- to strengthen UWIC's market position
- having acquired research degree awarding powers, to achieve university title.

Collaborative provision

12 Since 2002, UWIC has been actively developing its portfolio of collaborative programmes with a range of partner institutions in Wales, elsewhere in the UK, and overseas. There was a strategic decision to discontinue further education provision beyond the formal FE2HE Consortium and to expand taught postgraduate provision; the portfolio continues to develop. Collaborative provision was subject to internal review in January 2007 (see below, paragraphs 123 and 124).

13 In October 2007, there was a total of 816 students registered on UWIC's collaborative programmes, 678 in the UK and a further 138 overseas. The students on collaborative programmes in the UK comprised - eight at Barry College (Foundation Degrees), 154 at Bridgend College (HNC/HND, Foundation Degrees and BA (Hons)), 21 at Coleg Llandrillo (Foundation Degrees), 64 at Ystrad Mynach (HNC), 414 at London School of Commerce (BA (Hons), MSc and MBA), and 17 in Scotland (Certificate in Legal Metrology). In terms of overseas collaborative programmes, there were 61 students at EASB Institute of Management (BA (Hons) and MBA), eight at Limerick Senior College, Ireland (Diploma), seven at the Asian Centre for Management and Information Technology, Bangladesh (BA (Hons)), 24 at the University of Hong Kong (MSc), and 28 at the Dimitris Perrotis College, Greece (Foundation Degrees and BSc (Hons)).

Background information

14 The published information available for this review included:

- information on the UWIC website
- the previous QAA continuation audit report, published in 2002
- information on the websites of the Higher Education Statistics Agency, Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, Higher Education and Research Opportunities in the UK, and HEFCW.

15 In addition, the review team received:

- an institutional self-evaluation document
- an institutional student written submission
- an unpublished report for the review of research degree programmes conducted in 2006 by QAA on behalf of HEFCW
- an unpublished Progress Report produced by UWIC in 2006 on follow-up after the 2002 institutional review.

16 During its visit, the review team was given access to UWIC's intranet and to a range of internal documents.

The review process

17 QAA conducted a preliminary visit to the institution in July 2007 to discuss operational aspects of the review. QAA received the self-evaluation document in December 2007.

18 The review team visited UWIC on 6 to 8 February 2008 to explore with the Vice-Chancellor, senior members of staff and student representatives matters relating to the management of quality and standards raised by the self-evaluation document or other documentation provided for the team. During this briefing visit the team signalled a number of themes for the review visit and developed a programme of meetings, which was agreed with UWIC.

19 The review visit took place from 10 to 14 March 2008 and involved further meetings with staff of UWIC. The review team comprised Professor M Carswell, Mr A Hunt, Professor C Park, Professor G Taylor, and T Platt, the Review Secretary. The review was coordinated for the QAA by Dr J Ellis, Assistant Director, Reviews Group.

Developments since the previous academic quality review

20 The self-evaluation document summarised the key developments since the 2002 Institutional review, and these include:

- completing revision of the credit framework
- a review of UWIC's policy framework in 2006-07
- development of learning centres on two campuses and building/upgrading of some teaching spaces
- revision of the academic year
- revision of the academic structure (nine schools into five)
- creation of new senior staff posts
- revision of the committee structure
- major revisions to collaborative provision programmes and processes
- establishment of a Quality Enhancement Centre
- developments in Welsh language provision
- regular renewal of the Chartermark for Excellence in Public Service.

21 The review team found that UWIC has made uneven progress in addressing the recommendations in the 2002 continuation audit report, as confirmed in the 2006 Progress Review. For example, there is room for further progress in '...the formulation and implementation of assessment guidelines...' (see below, paragraph 54) and '[the] review of collaborative provision (see below, paragraphs 133) and that UWIC had been slow in 'reviewing...the proposed school review process...'. Also, the team thought UWIC could have made better progress since 2002 in 'developing its management information system to ensure course-specific data is easily accessible for the purpose of producing annual course reports' (see below, paragraph 65).

22 The QAA review of research degree programmes at UWIC (2006) drew attention to the representation system for research students. The review team found that UWIC has effectively addressed the matter of 'expanding the [research] student representation system so that it is more robust' (see below, paragraph 72).

23 The review team recognised that UWIC has made progress, particularly over the past two years, in addressing many of the areas identified in the 2002 review report but noted that a number of issues raised by the previous review had not been addressed in a timely manner. Thus, the team considers that UWIC still has some way to go in ensuring that all of its systems for quality assurance and enhancement are fully developed and embedded.

Section 2: The review investigations: institutional processes

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

24 Within the University of Wales' devolved model of quality assurance (see above, paragraph 5) formal responsibility for quality and standards rests with UWIC's Academic Board. Academic Board delegates responsibility for quality and standards to the Academic Quality and Standards Board, the Learning and Teaching Board and the Research and Enterprise Board. Responsibility for quality and standards at the school level rests with the respective school planning and management team. The Learning and Teaching Board and the Research and Enterprise Board are mirrored within schools by a Learning and Teaching Committee and a Research and Enterprise Committee.

25 Each school has a Director of Learning and Teaching who is responsible for quality and standards in relation to taught programmes, and a school Director of Research in relation to research degrees. The school's Management and Planning Team has overall responsibility for quality and standards within each school and is supported in this process by the school Learning and Teaching Board and regular meetings with the Assistant Registrar (Quality Systems) who heads the Quality Systems Unit. At programme level, the Programme Committee has a number of key functions including the monitoring, review and evaluation of the programme and the implementation of UWIC's regulations and procedures.

26 The Academic Handbook is available online to all staff and students and it contains the academic regulations, procedures and guidance. The Handbook is kept up to date through the Academic Handbook Review Group, which recommends updates to the Regulations and Special Cases Committee, and the Academic Quality and Standards Board, based upon suggestions coming from formal boards, committees, programme teams and/or individual lecturers. Following approval, changes are reported to Academic Board and announced to all staff by the Dean of Quality and Standards. The definitive Handbook is the version available online, and staff and students are encouraged to use this as their primary source. In addition, the Institutional Review Planning Group, chaired by the Dean of Quality and Standards, sets out to ensure all UWIC's processes and procedures are continuing to work consistently across the institution and in line with the precepts of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA.

27 The self-evaluation document stated that collaborative provision is subject to the same quality assurance requirements as home programmes with some additional requirements. Senior staff in a meeting with the review team clarified that an additional requirement for validation was a due diligence check of the proposed collaborative partner. The Academic Handbook includes a separate section for collaborative provision detailing the various procedures and requirements. The team identified some good practice in the ways that UWIC works with a small group of further education institutions (see below paragraph 130) but also identified some aspects of collaborative provision where there were differences from the *Code of practice* (see below, paragraph 66) and where agreements with a collaborative partner had not been monitored and fulfilled (see below, paragraph 133).

28 The review team concluded that an appropriate framework existed for managing quality and standards and that this was generally well understood by staff. However, there were aspects of the framework which could work better. The team considered that a greater emphasis on using the committee structure as a mechanism for sharing issues and for broadening staff awareness and experience would be beneficial. The team also considered that greater assurance is needed at an institutional level so that agreed procedures are followed consistently across the wider institution (see below, paragraphs 38-42, 54 and 133).

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

29 While UWIC recognises that enhancement activity is the responsibility of all staff, its Learning and Teaching Development Unit plays a central role in promoting the enhancement of learning and teaching. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit objectives are linked to UWIC's Corporate Strategic Plan and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. UWIC's approach to quality enhancement is set out in the Quality Enhancement Strategy which has two main aims: gathering information for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of learning and teaching; and the promotion of an ethos of self-evaluation to effect continuous improvement.

30 The review team considered that the role of the Learning and Teaching Development Unit in supporting schools to help achieve quality improvements was very positive. The team also learnt that embedding this activity in schools was crucial. During the review, the team found that there was some confusion among staff over the responsibilities of different elements of the Learning and Teaching Development Unit, including the role of the Quality Enhancement Centre. The team learnt that the Learning and Teaching Development Unit's relationship with schools was becoming increasingly important and as a consequence the team considered that the Learning and Teaching Development Unit would benefit from clarifying its structure and reinforcing its supportive role with schools. The role of the schools' Director of Learning and Teaching was seen by the review team to be central to a productive relationship between the schools and the Learning and Teaching Development Unit, and to the wider enhancement agenda.

31 While many of the activities set out on the Operational Plan for delivering the Quality Enhancement Strategy are aimed at achieving levels of data analysis which might be expected routinely in an institution such as UWIC (see below, paragraph 65),

it also includes clearer enhancement activities such as the Teaching Fellowship scheme, which supports a wide range of staff carrying out evidence-based learning; teaching and assessment projects; external benchmarking projects; and strategies for linking teaching and research.

32 The review team noted that senior staff come together across the institution through a variety of subgroups and working groups such as the annual 'debriefing' meeting of all chairs of examining boards. It was felt, therefore, that a feature of good practice was the mechanisms to bring senior staff together across the institution to promote consistency and contribute towards embedding enhancement.

Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

Programme approval

33 Deans of School with their Directors of Learning and Teaching have the responsibility for new programme development and planning. All proposals for new programmes leading to an award are subject to evaluation by the initial approval panel, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, before proceeding to validation. In the case of collaborative provision there is also an additional preliminary investigative visit which is used to establish whether or not the proposal should proceed to validation. In such cases there is also a process of due diligence carried out on the partner. The review team was satisfied that these processes were being carried out as defined.

34 The validation process is designed to ensure that new programmes are aligned with UWIC's Mission, meet quality and standards threshold requirements, and take cognisance of appropriate external reference points including *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and subject benchmark statements. The process involves scrutiny of a prescribed set of programme documentation by a panel of internal and external peers not previously associated with the programme, culminating in a formal validation event where the validation panel meets with school management and the programme team to discuss issues arising from the documentation. The recommendation from the panel is then sent to the Academic Quality and Standards Board for approval. Any conditions are given a clear deadline and are followed through by the Quality Systems Unit and reported on to the Academic Quality and Standards Board.

35 On the basis of a range of approval documentation and discussions with staff, the review team concluded that, in general, this process was working well. However, the team found in a paper to the Academic Quality and Standards Board (November 2006) that 21 per cent of conditions were not met until after the deadline had passed. Senior staff assured the team that improvements had been made but there was no later analysis available to confirm these improvements. It is important that vigilance is maintained and that meeting of conditions continues to be monitored and any required actions taken.

36 Although the procedure allows for an external panel member to be from the 'world of work' the review team did not see evidence to show that this was commonplace or that views of employers were consistently being used to inform

programme and curriculum design. For example, for the validation of modules which may be new modules for continual professional development purposes the process relies on directors of learning and teaching and involves no comment external to UWIC. As credits from such modules can be recognised with a certificate of credit or accrued as part of specified programmes, the lack of externality in the approval process is inconsistent with that applied to modules which form part of programmes. It was felt by the team that enhancing the degree of externality, particularly from employers, would be beneficial (see below, paragraph 46).

37 The process of validation appeared to be carefully monitored at an institutional level with regular monitoring of a validation and review schedule by the Academic Quality and Standards Board, scrutiny by the Quality Systems Unit of documentation and the holding of prevalidation and pre-review meetings to discuss the documentation and comments from panel members.

Annual monitoring

38 UWIC's self-evaluation document described the annual programme review as a self-critical, reflective quality check on performance and academic activity which aims to verify standards, evaluate performance and identify opportunities for enhancement and development. The annual programme review is completed by each Programme Director during the autumn term using an annual programme review template which includes a centrally provided dataset, an action plan and a report on progress on previous action plans. UWIC believes the annual programme review is well-established and demonstrates a high level of robustness and effectiveness. However, the review team found that the quality of annual programme reviews was variable. Good examples included an evaluative approach with all actions followed through, cognisance taken of external and student views, and a sound analysis of external examiners' reports. Weaker annual programme reviews were found to lack any real analysis, with missing information such as feedback from employers, lack of module-level feedback, with no strengths identified by staff and some actions not reported on. The team also found that the dataset provided centrally to courses for inclusion in reports was limited in its value as it did not necessarily include resit results and was generally not well analysed in the reports (see below, paragraph 65).

39 The review team heard that annual programme reviews were considered and approved by programme committees but the team found limited documentary evidence that the reviews had been consistently considered or approved by programme committees. UWIC's procedures require the annual programme reviews to be submitted to the Quality Systems Unit in the Academic Registry and, in parallel, be scrutinised by a school's Learning and Teaching Committee. It was confirmed by documentation and meetings with staff that annual programme reviews were not, in the main, being considered in this way and it was the annual programme review overview report and its action plan that was being considered by the school's Learning and Teaching Committee. The team considered that one reason for practice being different to agreed procedure was because there were felt to be too many annual programme reviews to be considered readily by a single committee. Although the team learnt that it was widely accepted among staff that practice was not in line with written procedures, this had not triggered a review of the procedure. This, combined with the inconsistent

approach to scrutiny of annual programme reviews at Programme Committee, led the team to conclude that there is insufficient discussion and debate around the annual programme review process with it being heavily dependent on the directors of learning and teaching. The team considered that the committee structures in the schools should be used as intended to ensure that each programme is properly evaluated and that the lessons learned are adequately shared with colleagues.

40 At an institutional level, the schools' annual programme review overview reports are considered by a subgroup of the Learning and Teaching Board which includes the Dean of Quality and Standards and all directors of learning and teaching. These overview reports are mainly descriptive and lack analytical content. Also, they do not include any school-level data or commentary. The Dean of Quality and Standards then prepares a report on generic issues arising from annual programme reviews which are not in the remit of schools to address. This report is considered and followed through by the Learning and Teaching Board.

41 In parallel, the Academic Quality and Standards Board undertakes an annual audit of annual programme reviews and reports on this to the Learning and Teaching Board. Although the self-evaluation document stated that it was rare for an annual programme review not to be submitted in a timely manner, the report revealed that a large proportion of annual programme reviews failed to be submitted to the Quality Systems Unit by the November deadline, with one school having submitted no reports by April. As the school overview reports and the generic overview reports were produced before the submission of many of the annual programme reviews it was unclear how UWIC is assured that all relevant issues have been identified and are then followed through. The review team considered that the coming together in the Learning and Teaching Board subgroup of key senior staff involved in the process was counteracting some of the shortcomings elsewhere in the system.

42 In conclusion, the review team considers it advisable for the institution to review and revise the process of annual monitoring of programmes to ensure it is consistently robust and effective.

Periodic review

43 The periodic review process involves scrutiny of a prescribed set of programme documentation by a panel of internal and external peers not previously associated with the programme. The process ends in a formal review event during which the Review Panel meets with school management, the programme team and students to discuss performance indicators and other issues arising from the programme documentation. The Academic Quality and Standards Board (and the Collaborative Provision Committee where appropriate) consider the reports generated by periodic review panels and monitor the completion of any conditions of approval. The review process is kept separate from the approval of changes to the programme which must then follow the review event using the processes outlined below. Some staff believed this was an unnecessary split. The review process appeared to be working as planned but the review team would encourage UWIC to consider whether the perceived benefits of splitting the review and the approval processes outweigh the additional complexity involved.

44 Programme teams are encouraged to make ongoing changes to programmes to keep them up to date and relevant through a minor and a major modifications process. For minor modifications the rationale for the change(s) is submitted to the Chair of the Academic Quality and Standards Board with evidence of support from the Programme Committee, the school Director of Learning and Teaching and the external examiner. Following agreement, a detailed list of approved minor modifications is presented to the Academic Quality and Standards Board. Major modifications are considered through a process closer to that of validation with externality but less documentation. The process includes a meeting of the panel with current students on the day of the event. Guidance is included in the Academic Handbook as to what constitutes each of these degrees of modification and more significant change is addressed through a revalidation.

45 A new process for the departmental review of UWIC's units and schools commenced in October 2007 with a review of student services. The event was treated as a pilot review with feedback generally being positive. The review team felt that the process appeared quite complex, involving a large amount of supporting documentation, and led to recommendations that may already have been evident. They would encourage UWIC to consider whether the process as currently defined genuinely adds value. However, in general, the team found that UWIC's procedures for periodic review and for modifications to programmes were appropriate and effective.

External participation in internal review processes

46 UWIC's procedures for internal approval, monitoring and review were found, in the main, to involve sufficient externality to provide confidence in those procedures. However, a recurring theme was that, formally at least, little feedback or advice was sought from employers and graduates. The review team therefore considers it desirable for the institution to develop more consistent approaches to the formal involvement of graduates and employers in the design, validation and review of programmes (see paragraphs 36 and 82).

Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies

47 UWIC is currently accredited and reviewed by 33 professional or other external bodies. Its procedures for programme approval and review can be adapted to take account of professional and statutory body requirements including conducting events jointly with professional and statutory bodies.

48 Directors of learning and teaching inform the Quality Systems Unit of the professional body accreditation, reviews and inspection as they occur, and the Quality Systems Unit holds details of all professional and statutory body approvals on a database. All reports of professional accrediting bodies or other forms of external scrutiny are considered fully as part of the standard UWIC processes. All accreditations undertaken since 2002 have achieved successful outcomes and no specific themes have emerged from the reports. However, UWIC has identified an opportunity to identify and disseminate good practice and this will be examined by the Quality Monitoring Committee in 2008-09. The review team concluded that arrangements for involvement of external agencies in approval and review were generally appropriate and sound.

Assessment practices and procedures

49 General assessment regulations, derived from those of the University of Wales, are set out in the Academic Handbook which also provides more specific 'generic' regulations associated with the type of programme (for example, for initial modular degrees or Foundation Degrees). In addition, programme documentation may include regulations specific to the programme. The Academic Handbook indicates that programme regulations are subservient to generic regulations which are, in turn, subservient to the General Assessment Regulations. Examining boards encountering conflict are required to refer to the higher set of regulations.

50 The relevant generic regulations apply in all cases, except where variations are approved at programme validation. Variations can, for example, be approved on grounds of public, statutory and regulatory body requirements and examples of this were noted. The review team was informed that students studying for a public, statutory and regulatory body accredited award who meet the generic regulations, but fail to satisfy the professional body requirements are normally eligible for a non-accredited award in the same discipline area, but no policy ensures the existence of such an award in every case. During its investigations, the team also learned that some generic regulations allow variation in the number of permitted reassessments, and penalties for late submission of assignments also vary between schools, leading to inconsistencies in the experience of students on different courses. Such variation must, again, be agreed at the time of programme validation. Staff told the review team that there was a need and an intention to reduce inconsistency in the assessment process.

51 The Academic Handbook Review Group reviews regulations, and changes are proposed to the Academic Quality and Standards Board by the Regulations and Special Cases Committee. Regulatory changes may be prompted by inconsistency of practice or interpretation reported through boards and committees or programme teams. For example, recent work has considered the treatment of borderline marks, and the use of compensation resulting in new and clearer guidelines.

52 Students are made aware of assessment regulations by the Student Handbook, which refers students to the general assessment regulations in the Academic Handbook, and states further that the exact details on assessment for a particular programme should be included in the relevant programme handbook. The Chartermark Manual (see above, paragraph 20) requires programme handbooks to outline any programme or school-specific regulations including penalties for the late submission of work. Examples of programme handbooks available to the review team varied in the extent to which they met this requirement. Overall, while students clearly have access to the regulatory framework governing their awards, the situation is made complex by the existence of three levels of regulation and by the possibility of variations between similar awards.

53 Guideline assessment grading criteria are provided at institutional level and each school is now required to specify school assessment criteria in line with these, but reflecting the appropriate discipline areas. These school criteria are differentiated by level in some cases, but not all. Both in their written submission and in meetings with the review team, students confirmed that assessment criteria are clearly presented to

them in programme handbooks. However, a number of external examiners had noted that the guidance given could be more helpful to academic staff and this was being discussed further by the Institutional Review Planning Group at the time of writing the self-evaluation document.

54 Programme handbooks are required to include 'undertakings with regard to standards of feedback on work and assignments and turn-around times for these'; however, a number of those available to the review team failed to contain such information, for example, the MBA Handbook. Students reported varying experiences with timeliness of feedback, with best practice noted by the team in the Cardiff School of Sport where, from the start of the current academic year, students have been given a clear date for the return of each piece of assessed work. In other cases, however, work had been returned too late to enable students to learn from feedback before submitting their next assignment. Variability in the quality of feedback was also seen as an issue by some students, although where the newly introduced standard template was in use this was seen as useful. The student written submission reported mixed views about the timeliness and quality of coursework feedback and the timing of, and feedback from, examinations. The team considers it advisable that UWIC ensure feedback on assessments is provided to students in a clear, consistent and timely manner.

External examiners and their reports

55 External examiners for taught programmes are nominated by schools, using a standard form, and appointed by the Academic Quality and Standards Board on the advice of a working group comprising the Chair and Deputy Chair of that Committee with the member of the Quality Systems Unit responsible for external examiners. The Quality Systems Unit sends out letters of appointment and briefing information, maintains a list of external examiners and reminds schools when appointments are about to expire.

56 All new external examiners for taught programmes are invited to an induction day which includes opportunity to meet with the programme team. The review team was informed that external examiners are strongly encouraged to attend this event and that, if they are unable to do so, individual meetings are arranged for them by the school. Fourteen new external examiners attended the most recent induction and their evaluation indicated that the content had been relevant and useful.

57 Examination boards are chaired by one of a small number of chairs who are required to undertake development for this role. One of this group is a member of staff from a collaborative partner. External examiners report on a standard form which is available electronically. This includes a checklist with opportunities for comment on academic standards and the quality of student achievement and assessment. External examiners are also requested to refer to the national qualifications framework and any relevant benchmarks. The best examples of completed reports provided a clear evaluation of the programme and its standards, but quality was variable and the institution may wish to monitor this more closely.

58 The self-evaluation document indicated that reports are discussed at programme committees, and reflected on in annual programme reviews. Deans informed the

review team that they read all the reports for their school. In addition, directors of learning and teaching summarise all external examiners' reports in their schools, including those from collaborative provision, and formulate an action plan which is presented to the school's Learning and Teaching Committee and its Management and Planning Team. A standard form is used for this process and results in summaries, which include a list of good practice points followed by a list of issues with actions to be taken to redress these. In the examples seen, the team found little evidence of analysis and evaluation or of building on identified good practice. In response staff informed the team that the purpose of the overview was to agree actions and that it was not a mechanism for analysis. The team learnt that directors of learning and teaching are responsible for monitoring actions, and the Dean of Quality and Standards also reads all external examiners' reports and produces a more evaluative summary for the Academic Quality and Standards Board, the Learning and Teaching Board and Academic Board.

59 Programme directors respond to external examiners on a standard form, copies of the response are sent to the Quality Systems Unit which sends out reminders in the case of outstanding responses. In addition, key issues are discussed by the Dean of Quality and Standards with the appropriate Director of Learning and Teaching. In very serious cases the Dean of Quality and Standards may contact the external examiner directly.

60 External examiners' reports for collaborative provision are dealt with in an analogous way to campus-based programmes with consideration by the programme committee and inclusion in the relevant school Director of Learning and Teaching's summary. As far as possible, a common external examiner is appointed for all programmes. A separate annual report on the external examining of HNDs is produced for Edexcel, using its standard form.

61 The Examining Board for a research degree normally includes one external examiner; however, in the case that the student is also a member of UWIC's staff two external examiners are required. External examiners for research degrees are proposed by a school's research degree committee and confirmed by the institution's Research Degrees Committee.

62 The review team considered that, overall, the procedures for the appointment and induction of external examiners are appropriate. Processes are in place for responding to external examiner comment and for monitoring actions resulting from such comments. However, the team thought that more analysis and evaluation might be encouraged at the school level and the institution may benefit from making more explicit use of good practice identified by external examiners as part of its enhancement strategy.

Progression and completion statistics

63 Statistical data are used to inform both strategic planning and quality enhancement. For strategic planning corporate key performance indicators (for use by the Board of Governors and senior managers) and school key performance indicators (used in the preparation of schools' strategic plans) were introduced in 2006.

Corporate key performance indicators include a number relevant to learning and teaching including recruitment, employability, percentage of good honours degrees and maintenance and improvement of external quality ratings. Data are compared with national benchmarks where available, otherwise against a collection of competitor HE institutions. Key recruitment, progression and achievement data at institutional level are also reported directly to Academic Board and its relevant sub-boards which also monitor actions in response to issues raised by these data.

64 The review team was informed that retention and progression issues at programme level are considered by examination boards. Further, annual programme reviews include some recruitment, progression and achievement data. This is supplied centrally to each programme, but concerns were expressed by staff about data accuracy. Examples given to the team included the misrepresentation of overseas awards, so that postgraduate programmes appeared to have a majority of students without a first degree, and progression and award figures which failed to reflect reassessment results. All data are presented at the level of the full programme year cohort; there is at present no facility to monitor at sub-cohort level, classifying, for example, by gender, mode of study, ethnicity or disability.

65 There are several sources of statistical data, for example, data on award classifications are supplied by the Academic Registry and those on graduate destinations by the Careers Unit. Statistical information for collaborative provision is held by the Registry, and partner institutions are responsible for feeding in data. Moderators supply data back to collaborative programme teams for monitoring purposes. UWIC has recognised in its Quality Enhancement Strategy that this multiplicity of data sources can be confusing and steps are being taken towards the creation of a single data source. A replacement student information system is to be specified and introduced and, at the time of the review, an appointment had been made to take overall responsibility for the management of this project. This individual will work closely with key user groups including students. The review team welcomes this step and considers it advisable for UWIC to prioritise the development of new management information systems and associated processes to allow accurate and timely monitoring of student data at all levels.

External reference points

66 UWIC uses the *Code of practice* to keep its regulations, policies and procedures under review. Until September 2005, the focus of this activity was the Code of Practice Working Group whose functions at that point were subsumed into the Institutional Review Group. The self-evaluation document provided a number of examples where consideration of individual sections of the *Code of practice* had led to revisions in policy and practice agreed through the committee structure. These included use of *Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* for its postgraduate research requirements, and *Section 4: External examining* to identify, and then address, some 'small issues' for improvement of the external examining process. In addition, the institution's draft policy for learning recognition, accreditation and development includes mapping of the institution's draft policy and procedures for accreditation of prior learning onto the QAA guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning. While, in general, the institution aligns its procedures closely with the *Code of practice* the

review team noted that collaborative provision award certificates do not include the name of the collaborating partner although transcripts do. The team was informed that this was because the certificates are issued by the University of Wales and it is this body which determines the wording. The review team considered that in order to meet the spirit of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, and particularly *Precept 24*, UWIC give further consideration to the wording on the certificate, in consultation with the University of Wales as the awarding body, so that potential employers are not misled over any aspect of a student's award.

67 Subject benchmarks, the qualifications framework and any professional body requirements are considered as part of programme development, validation and review. Such consideration is ensured by the inclusion in the required documentation for these processes of programme specifications, based on the QAA guidelines. The Academic Handbook includes a pro forma and guidance on the writing of programme specifications. The latter notes that learning outcomes should be considered in the light of their relationship to external reference points including subject benchmark statements, the qualifications framework and any professional body requirements. The guidance states further that 'Subject benchmark statements provide a helpful starting point when designing a new programme or reviewing an existing programme. However, they are not the sole point of reference, particularly for programmes that do not coincide with the subject definitions used in preparing the benchmark statements'. Validation and periodic review panels are given guidance about the institution's expectations on the Academic Infrastructure and reports from such events confirmed discussion of issues relating to, for example, the level of attainment expected and how this related to the qualifications framework. External examiners' reports comment on the extent to which the programme continues to meet these expectations.

68 UWIC has an increasing number of Foundation Degrees in its collaborative provision. The review team was informed that any such programmes validated since the publication of the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* took this into account. In the case of programmes which predated the benchmark, alignment would be checked at periodic review and/or revalidation.

69 Programme specifications available to the review team used the pro forma and appeared consistent and appropriate. In cases where the proposed programme does not meet a benchmark in full, a case for exception must be made to the Academic Quality and Standards Board and then to Academic Board. The team noted an example of this in the MBA programme which does not require prior work experience as part of its admissions criteria and thus fails to meet the benchmark for this type of programme, which is normally considered post-experience and where the experience required will be at least two years, with the typical entrant having substantially more. The team found that there had been discussion up to the level of Academic Board; however, the discussion was primarily concerned with non-academic issues about student recruitment. Neither did a subsequent review fully address this issue.

70 The review team considered that, in general, UWIC had considered the purposes of the reference points, reflected on its own practices in the relevant areas and has

taken any necessary steps to ensure appropriate changes are being made. However, UWIC may wish to reconsider its practices in relation to certification and its consideration of the MBA benchmark statement.

Student representation at operational and institutional level

71 Student representatives are appointed to each programme and invited to attend programme committees. Some training is offered by the Students' Union. Until the current academic year, the role of student representative involved liaising with fellow students and attending a range of meetings at school and institutional level to represent their views. Problems arose in recruiting representatives and discussion with students established that while they were willing to focus on issues relating directly to their programmes they did not want to spend time at meetings dealing with wider issues.

72 A new system has now been put in place so that, in addition to programme representatives, each school has a paid school representative. These are appointed competitively, paid, managed and provided with a two-day training programme by the Students' Union to ensure a level of independence from the school. They meet regularly with their school Learning and Teaching Committee, attend, as appropriate, other key meetings of students and staff, and liaise with programme representatives. They also meet as a group and have specific targets for improving communication with, and involvement of, students. The school representatives who met with the review team were enthusiastic about their role. They had found the training useful and were able to describe ways in which feedback to their schools had made a difference. They further described a range of mechanisms for keeping students informed of action resulting from their feedback. These vary between schools, but include email, a special virtual learning environment module and posters. Other students, particularly programme representatives, also indicated that they found the new system beneficial. The student written submission indicated that a majority of the students surveyed were aware of the system of student representation and knew who their representatives were.

73 Both the QAA Special review of postgraduate research programmes and the interim report of the University of Wales External Assessor drew attention to the need for better systems of representation for research students and, as a result, a Research Students Committee, elected by research students, has been created with terms of reference which include appointing research student members to both the Research Degrees Committee and the Research and Enterprise Board. Some, but not all, school research degrees committees also include student members.

74 At institutional level, students are represented on the Board of Governors, Academic Board, the Learning and Teaching Board, the Academic Quality and Standards Board, and Research Degrees Committee. The review team was informed by the sabbatical officers that they had been given an induction to the work of the Learning and Teaching Board and the Academic Board before their first attendance. The Vice-Chancellor's Board also meets formally with officers of the Students' Union on a regular basis. In addition, a student sabbatical officer (not the President) is a member of the committee responsible for administering the Student Contingency

Fund, and is fully involved in the development of the procedures and criteria governing management of this fund as well as in agreeing awards to individual students. The President of the Students' Union is a member of the Financial Contingency Fund Appeals Committee.

75 In the case of collaborative provision, the Memoranda of Programme Agreement (see below, paragraph 126) require each collaborative programme to convene programme committees, which must include student representation. Collaborative provision students have no formal voice on UWIC programme boards, but opportunities exist for informal meetings with UWIC staff and attendance at UWIC campuses. Neither Students' Union sabbatical officers nor school and programme representatives had any links with students in collaborative partner institutions.

76 Overall, the review team considered UWIC offers a wide range of opportunities for student representation and, in partnership with the Students' Union, makes available various levels of training for its student representatives. In particular, the team noted as good practice the introduction and development of an effective system of school representatives to improve communication with, and involvement of, students.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

77 A range of methods is in use to elicit feedback about their experience from current students. All students are asked to evaluate each module and results from this, with comments from programme representatives, feed into course committees and the annual programme review. In addition, the Learning and Teaching Development Unit operates an annual student satisfaction survey including as standard a broad range of issues, but with the addition each year of different and specific focus such as library provision or student services. Students who withdraw before the end of their programme are sent a questionnaire and the various central bodies which comprise Student Services have developed appropriate local mechanisms for monitoring client satisfaction.

78 UWIC has recognised the danger of 'survey fatigue' and a lack of engagement by students was also evidenced to the review team in the low rate of response of some module surveys. To combat this UWIC has started to make more use of focus groups and has experimented with innovative projects such as the Diary Room, modelled on TV reality shows, in which students were able to discuss issues via a video link. A diary room was set up for several days on each campus and students informed the team that it had generated an enthusiastic response.

79 Collaborative provision students are also asked to complete module evaluations and end of programme evaluation outcomes feed into the Collaborative Programme Committee and the annual programme review. Again there was evidence of a low level of engagement with module evaluations, but moderators informed the review team that part of their role is to hold a private meeting with students at their partner institutions to discuss concerns. Where students are primarily from cultures in which there is a reluctance to criticise teachers, care is taken to explain the purpose of the meetings and to encourage participation.

80 Use is made of the extensive information provided by the National Student Survey with institutional level results analysed by the Learning and Teaching Development Unit and discussed at the Learning and Teaching Board and Academic Board. Programme specific results are distilled for each school and discussed at a meeting with the Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching and the Dean of Learning and Teaching. An action plan is then generated to address any concerns and the Annual Student Learning Experience Survey was extended to incorporate the views of collaborative students from February 2007.

81 For feedback from graduates, UWIC makes use of the National Destinations from Leavers of Higher Education Survey carried out six months after graduation. An analysis of this is presented to the Learning and Teaching Board and to Academic Board each year. Annual programme reports also include a section on graduate feedback. Reports available to the review team indicated that this was interpreted as end of programme evaluation rather than information from graduates several years into their careers, although a number of examples of informal contact with alumni were cited. Some schools have local databases to enable them to remain in contact with their graduates and the Alumni office has occasionally used its database to seek feedback on specific issues.

82 The self-evaluation document stated that 'UWIC has many different ways in which the employers' voice is heard' many of them using informal links through work with professional bodies, business organisations, placement providers and knowledge transfer partnership partners. More formally, an institutional-level stakeholder forum and school advisory boards are planned. However, the section of annual programme reviews focused on feedback from employers suggested a low level of engagement (see above, paragraphs 36 and 46).

83 In conclusion, the review team considered UWIC has made considerable effort to obtain feedback from its current students but should consider engaging in more formal mechanisms to seek feedback from its graduates and their employers.

Procedures for student complaints and appeals

84 The formal procedures for student complaints and appeals are detailed in the Academic Handbook. Students are informed of both procedures via the Student Handbook and web links to further detail. Information is also given in the 'frequently asked questions' section of the virtual learning environment site.

85 Initially, complainants are encouraged to seek an informal resolution to their complaint if possible. Beyond this, the formal procedure has three stages culminating in a hearing by a panel chaired by a member of the Vice-Chancellor's Board. Clear expectations of the maximum time taken for each stage are provided. Once the internal procedures are exhausted complainants are provided with information to allow them to take the case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. The Director of Operations has overall responsibility for UWIC's Complaints Procedure, but the Dean of Students has the role of Complaints Officer and handles the administration of student complaints. A report on the use of the complaints system is made annually to the Academic Quality and Standards Board and Academic Board.

Students studying with collaborative partners use the partner's complaints procedures in cases where the issue is clearly the partner's responsibility, but where the complaint involves academic issues covered by the Memorandum of Agreement then UWIC reserves the right to intervene.

86 UWIC's Academic Verification and Appeals Procedure for taught programmes is concerned solely with representations against academic decisions. Appeals can only be made on the grounds of factual or arithmetical error in the assessment of the student work concerned, irregularity in the conduct of the assessment or mitigating circumstances which, for good reason, were not made known to the examining board at the time of its deliberations. The first stage is a formal request for verification of the results in question. Following this, if the issue is not resolved, a formal appeal may be made. The Vice-Chancellor or his nominee determines whether a prima facie case exists and if it does an appeal panel is convened. As with complaints, timescales are clearly stated although quite long, there is a maximum period of three months in which the prima facie decision must be made. Students not satisfied with the final outcome of the institution's procedures are provided with information on the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. A report on the use of the complaints system is made annually to the Academic Quality and Standards Board and Academic Board. Appeals against other awarding bodies such as City and Guilds must be made to the body concerned and the appeals procedure directs students to Academic Registry for information about this. All students studying with collaborative partners have access to, and must use, UWIC's procedures for appeals. The review team noted one case of a partner student handbook which failed to make this clear (see below, paragraph 133).

87 A separate, but analogous appeals procedure exists for research degree students. Details of the appeals procedure for postgraduate research students are published in the Research Degree Regulations, which are part of the Research Studies Manual. This includes inadequate supervision as grounds for an appeal. Timelines are again clear.

88 The review team found that UWIC has in place appropriate processes for the resolution of student complaints and appeals. Students who met with the team indicated that, although they did not know the detail of such procedures, they knew where to find them and where to seek help in using them.

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

89 UWIC's approach to the appointment, appraisal and reward of its academic staff is embedded within its *Human Resources Strategy 2004-08* and aligned with its *Corporate Strategic Plan 2007-11*. The Staff Development Unit was set up in 1999 and integrated into Human Resources in 2003-04. Schools have been responsible for staffing since the new school structure was introduced in 2006.

90 There is a comprehensive Management Guidance Manual for the recruitment and selection of staff, and generic role profiles have been defined for different academic grades which are 'broadly comparable' with Higher Education Role Analysis expectations. Generic job descriptions (with teaching and research and teaching and scholarship categories) and person specifications are defined for all academic posts,

and there is mandatory training for members of selection panels. The two Pro Vice-Chancellors 'monitor all academic recruitment from a QA perspective'. There are criteria for the appointment of Graduate Teaching Assistants, and a school-based selection process chaired by the Dean. For staff who teach on collaborative programmes, the UWIC programme moderator must approve their curricula vitae as suitable for the UWIC validated programme.

91 Since 2006, new academic staff without HE Academy Fellowship, and with insufficient experience to gain this recognition, are required to complete UWIC's Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education (PGCertHE). Successful completion gives automatic professional recognition as a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and is a condition of upgrade to Lecturer. Staff whom the review team met confirmed that this is now normal practice. For more established staff, recognition from the Higher Education Academy can be attained by submission of a portfolio of evidence of successful teaching and assessment.

92 All staff new to UWIC are required to take part in the corporate induction programme, which includes half-day modules on corporate induction, workplace induction, workplace health and safety training, diversity in the workplace, academic induction, information technology, enhancing the student experience, and professional development. Completion of the corporate induction programme is a requirement of the probation period. Schools and departments also run local induction activities, such as mentoring and buddy systems. New academic staff normally serve a 12-month probation period and successful completion of probation is not conditional on completion of the PGCertHE.

93 Staff appraisal occurs via the mandatory annual Staff Performance Review Scheme which was introduced in August 2007. The Scheme is a structured approach to objective setting, agreeing clear action plans, reviewing individual performance, providing formal feedback, and identifying personal development needs. The team was told that poor staff performance is identified through UWIC's Capability Procedure, which is often triggered by feedback from students. Deans of School are responsible for dealing with cases of poor performance.

94 In terms of rewarding staff, UWIC adopted the National Framework Agreement in August 2006. There are clear criteria for promotion, clear processes, and clear job descriptions for senior posts. Promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer requires evidence of effectiveness in teaching, administration and (to a lesser extent) research and enterprise; promotion to Reader requires evidence of effectiveness in research enterprise, and (to a lesser extent) teaching and administration. The review team concluded that UWIC has in place appropriate and effective systems and procedures for the appointment, appraisal and reward of academic staff.

Assurance of the quality of teaching through staff support and development

95 Staff development activity is reported regularly to the Vice-Chancellor's Board, and termly to the Board of Governors and the Human Resources Committee. A Staff Development Panel was set up in August 2004 'with the purpose of steering staff

development at UWIC at a strategic level'. UWIC has had corporate Investors in People status since 2005, having achieved it at building block level over the period since 2000, and this will be re-assessed during 2008. The review team was told that the Board of Governors expected schools to allocate a proportion of their staffing budget for 2007-08 to staff development, and that deans of school would be accountable at the end of the year for spending that allocation in ways that help deliver the school's strategic plan.

96 Many of UWIC's staff development activities are delivered through the Staff Development Unit. The Unit runs a programme of events which in 2007-08 included workshops on the finance system, the virtual learning environment, corporate induction, enhancing the student experience, recruitment and selection, and the Staff Performance Review scheme. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit also contributes to staff development. One theme in the Learning and Teaching Development Unit Plan 2006-07 was 'to work with colleagues to develop a practical continual professional development scheme...and to provide pertinent professional development opportunities'. In July 2007, UWIC received Higher Education Academy accreditation for its Professional Standards scheme, and in 2007 40 per cent of academic staff were registered with the Academy. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit publishes regular newsletters, runs an annual lecture series and organises an annual Learning and Teaching Conference which enables UWIC's Teaching Fellows to share their research findings with colleagues. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit also delivers the staff development workshops which make up the PGCertHE. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit runs e-learning workshops and coordinated UWIC's involvement in the Joint Information Systems Committee e-benchmarking project.

97 UWIC has a continual professional development framework which is linked to the Performance Review process and is formally recognised by the Higher Education Academy. Staff are expected to identify their own personal development needs via staff appraisal and through engagement with professional bodies and subject communities. The UWIC Human Resources Strategy states that all staff are expected to keep a personal development portfolio. The review team was advised that the personal development needs of part-time staff are identified and addressed in the same way as for full-time staff.

98 Particular staff development opportunities are available for specific groups of staff, including deans of school, new programme directors, UWIC moderators on collaborative programmes and staff who deliver programmes in partner institutions. Staff delivering programmes in collaborative partner institutions have access to all of the UWIC staff development activities as well as to those in their own institutions, and UWIC moderators are expected to carry out specific staff development exercises as part of their duties.

99 There is a voluntary system for the peer observation of teaching (called the Peer Learning and Development Scheme) which provides an opportunity to reflect on educational practices, recognise achievements and identify personal development needs. The system is designed to be developmental and not part of formal appraisal, promotion and performance management. The review team found that few of the staff they met with had taken part in the scheme.

100 Academic staff can apply for one of a small number (three in 2007-08) of Teaching Fellowship awards which are made annually and which provide funding of up to £4,000 over two years to promote innovative and evidence-based approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. Fellows are required to devise and test a teaching intervention, evaluate its effectiveness, and share the findings with colleagues within and beyond UWIC, including presenting at the annual Learning and Teaching Conference. Successful completion of a Teaching Fellowship can be, and is, used as evidence in support of applications for promotion.

101 The review team concluded UWIC has a proactive and strategic approach to the support and development of staff, which is effective in practice and appears to make good use of available resources.

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

102 There are no UWIC programmes currently delivered entirely by distance learning, although the approval and validation of distance programmes is largely the same as that for traditional programmes, with extra consideration of delivery mode.

103 Many, if not most, programmes, both at UWIC and in partner institutions, include elements delivered through blended learning (a combination of face-to-face and e-learning), and the provision of online access to learning materials has increased in recent years. This development is informed by UWIC's e-Learning Strategy, supported by the Learning and Teaching Development Unit, and operated through the virtual learning environment. The review team was told that all modules on all UWIC programmes are expected to have a virtual learning environment site; Learning and Teaching Development Unit staff offer formal and informal assistance in the use of the virtual learning environment, and some schools are running pilot projects designed to further the development of facilities within the virtual learning environment (including embedding plagiarism detection software within it). Students whom the team met said that online provision has improved greatly over the last two years, and is now generally very good (although some modules still have minimal content on the virtual learning environment).

104 The review team concluded that UWIC is making good use of the virtual learning environment, and has good systems in place to support staff who wish to make more effective use of it.

Learning support resources

105 Each of UWIC's four campuses has a learning centre managed by the Library and Information Services Unit. Centres include a library, access to information technology (IT) and study space. Two of the centres are new and house bookable, flexible learning spaces, areas with designated social learning spaces and the institution's largest IT suites, which offer extended opening hours. Additional resource is provided by a Learning Support Co-ordinator, and study skills support is offered through in-course workshops requested by tutors; bookable workshops classes; and a recently revised virtual learning environment skills module. A Writing Fellow, funded by the Royal Literary Fund is available to help students with writing support on an individual basis.

106 Information about the learning centres is available to students via a clear and comprehensive website which details facilities available and opening times for each campus. In addition the website offers access to an online induction to the libraries, electronic resource packs for different subjects, the catalogue, electronic journals and online loans renewal. Wherever they are normally based, students, including those studying with collaborative partners, may physically access any learning centre.

107 Library and Information Services staff, including subject librarians, work closely with school staff to meet programme needs both in terms of collection development and in terms of specialised input, for example, tailored research resource inductions. As three out of the four campuses now essentially house single schools, Library and Information Services staff on these campuses increasingly offer relevant specialisations in terms of their professional interests thus improving the support offered to learners. Such support is frequently offered via workshops and the provision of electronic materials designed to develop students' own learning and information retrieval skills rather than by one-to-one response to student enquiries.

108 Both the Student Learning Experience Survey (see above, paragraph 77) and the National Student Survey include sections on learning resources, and responses to these are used to inform developments - for example, targeted improvements in library provision for psychology followed from issues identified in the National Student Survey. In addition, Library and Information Services staff hold a series of meetings with schools to inform them of future developments and to elicit feedback on the service. These meetings generate action plans which are then used to inform the agenda of the following meeting. A recent development is the inclusion of the newly appointed school representatives in these meetings to provide a student viewpoint (see above, paragraphs 72 and 76).

Academic guidance, support and supervision

109 UWIC policy states that 'within the first month of commencing their programme...all students are allocated a personal tutor whom they are required to see in scheduled tutorials', also 'arrangements for tutorials, including the time and location are communicated to the students at the beginning of each academic year, with meetings occurring once per term as a minimum'. During meetings with students, the review team discovered that this was not happening in all cases. All students on taught programmes have access to tutorial support, but in some schools this remains on an at need basis and with whatever tutor is available, rather than regularly with a named individual. For example, the School of Management has created an open access, student-friendly area where students can find a personal tutor at certain times. Year tutors also play a role in supporting their students. Most collaborative provision students who met with the team were able to identify their personal tutors, but again, particularly where cohorts are small, students were encouraged to approach available staff. In practice, the range of systems available appears to be effective and students were complimentary about the availability of staff, but UWIC may wish to consider whether it should work towards a more consistent approach.

110 A Personal Tutor Handbook is available for tutors. This provides guidance as to the responsibilities of both tutor and student. It also gives detailed information about

the support available in Student Services and information about the range of academic support services available including the learning centres, study skills advice and the Writing Fellow (see above, paragraph 105 and 106).

111 Where formal tutorial meetings are in place these are frequently structured around students' personal development planning. The Learning and Teaching Development Unit currently offers some limited support for personal development planning via links from its website, and some students spoke of using a form to log their personal experiences. The review team found no evidence of a consistent approach to personal development planning. However UWIC's *Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy* included in its targets an audit of the mechanisms for providing personal development planning, an evaluation of student satisfaction with the process and support for tutors providing personal development planning via a generic online recording tool.

112 In addition to the UWIC Student Handbook, students are provided with programme and/or module handbooks which should include all the detail needed to understand their programme of study. While the standard and contents of those handbooks available to the review team were variable (see below, paragraphs 132, 139) all provided detail of course content, module choice and assessment breakdown. Students informed the team that there had been considerable improvement in the last two years in the course information provided. Information about modules was provided to them well in advance of the need to make choices and, in some cases, they could access via the virtual learning environment information on all modules on all years of their programme allowing advance planning. The Cardiff School of Management provides additional information and support for its placement students with learning outcomes and methods of assessment agreed with the placement provider and the student to ensure sound learning outcomes.

113 A number of additional arrangements are in place to support international students. Courses are available to prepare students for UK higher education and provide them with the opportunity to study for externally recognised English Language qualifications. The International Office provides ongoing English language and study skills support, and schools may also offer specific help, for example, the School of Management has appointed a Mandarin speaking tutor to support its substantial number of Chinese students.

114 Academic and supervisory support for postgraduate research students is provided via the supervisory team which comprises a director of studies and at least one other supervisor. The institution places a limit of six on the number of director of studies positions held by a single member of staff. There is no limit to the number of supervisory teams to which a single member of staff can contribute. The Research Students' Handbook provides information about the rights and duties of students and supervisors, and all other aspects of the research degree programme.

115 The review team concluded that, apart from the inconsistencies noted above in relation to personal tutors and the variability of content in some student handbooks, overall, UWIC has an appropriate range of academic guidance, support and supervision in place.

Personal support and guidance

116 The Student Services Unit, led by the Dean of Students, provides a wide range of non-academic support and guidance services including careers advice, counselling, disability, student finance, health, chaplaincy and a day nursery. Students may approach these services directly or may be referred by personal tutors. Information about the unit is provided via a clear and comprehensive website which gives details of the various services including opening hours. Various mechanisms are in place to monitor service performance. In some cases, for example careers, appropriate questions are included within the annual student satisfaction survey or the whole of the service may form a special focus for this survey (see also paragraph 77). In others, such as disability services and the day nursery, feedback is sought by means of regular questionnaires to clients. In addition, the Student Services Unit was the subject of the first of the newly introduced departmental reviews (see above, paragraph 45).

117 The Careers Development Service not only provides information on careers, but also offers help to programme teams in embedding employability, including the provision of generic and customised career workshops into the curriculum, developing work placements and other employer engagements and it collects and disseminates the 'Destination of Leavers' data as specified by the Higher Education Statistics Agency. The student written submission indicated that students were generally satisfied with the Careers Development Service with the majority finding the advice received on issues such as curricula vitae, applications and job research 'very helpful'.

118 The physical, mental and spiritual well-being of students is supported through a range of services. The health service includes a nursing officer on each campus with the lunchtime services of a local General Practitioner service. Counselling is available in both face-to-face and electronic formats to help support students with mental health issues. The chaplaincy is headed by a full-time chaplain and offers non-judgemental spiritual support to students of all faiths and of none. The Chaplain organises a number of Christian activities directly, but is also able to put students in touch with places of worship for the major faiths in the city. Each campus has either a prayer room or chapel available for services and quiet reflection.

119 The Disability Service coordinates support for disabled students across the institution, including screening of students for dyslexia, training and coordination of support workers, and the development and support of academic staff in meeting the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act*. It seeks feedback on its activities by means of regular questionnaires.

120 The Financial Advisory Service seeks to help students to budget effectively and to access their full entitlement to financial support. In addition it is responsible for administering the institution's Financial Contingency Fund which provides discretionary awards to enable students in excessive financial hardship to remain on their programmes of study.

121 Additional support for students from outside the EU is provided by the International Office which arranges meeting services for such students, provides additional pre-sessional English courses and offers advice on visa and immigration issues. International students who met with the review team indicated that they were well supported.

122 In general, the review team heard many positive comments from students about the Student Services Unit, with some saying that it did not always get the credit it deserved. In conclusion, the team considers that UWIC has an appropriate range of personal support services in place.

Collaborative provision

123 UWIC has more than 800 students studying with its collaborative provision partners (see above, paragraph 13). The majority of these are in the UK, but over 100 are based in a small number of overseas institutions. A significant part of the UK provision is the FE2HE-UWIC Consortium comprising local FE colleges offering mainly Foundation Degrees. A discussion paper on collaborative provision was presented to the major academic committees in the months preceding the review which indicates that the institution's developmental priorities are 'to grow its collaborative academic provision further through a mixed balance of partnerships at local, regional, national and international level'. The self-evaluation document stated further that there is an aspiration to double the number of international franchise students and maintain steady growth within the FE2HE Consortium over the next 15-year period.

124 UWIC undertook a major review of its collaborative provision in early 2007. This was carried out by a panel of three senior staff with two external members. A detailed report was produced and was made available to the review team. It included 33 recommendations which are the subject of an ongoing action plan. One result has been the recent strengthening of the Collaborative Provision Office, which provides support for engagement with collaborative partners, by the appointment of a Collaborative Provision Manager with responsibility for collaborative provision. Work is ongoing to define more clearly the exact roles of the Collaborative Provision Office and the Quality Systems Unit with the former focusing on enhancement issues.

125 UWIC defined franchised programmes as those which it has developed, but which are delivered at a partner institution. Programmes developed by the partner, but delivered under UWIC's authority are said to be validated. In a third form of partnership activity the institution offers an arrangement it described as 'accreditation' in which a course run by a partner articulates with part of a UWIC award so that students completing the accredited course are offered advanced standing on the UWIC award, the latter part of which may itself be franchised to the partner. An example of this latter arrangement is the accreditation of a postgraduate diploma of the London School of Commerce where students who successfully complete this move on to the third (dissertation) semester of the UWIC MBA, also delivered at the London School of Commerce.

126 Each collaborative provision programme is in the relevant school which has responsibility for quality and standards and is supported by the Collaborative Provision Office and the Quality Systems Unit. The self-evaluation document stated that collaborative programmes are subject to the same procedures for initial approval, validation, periodic review, annual monitoring, minor and major modifications and the appointment of external examiners as all other UWIC programmes. Examination of the material provided showed this to be the case for franchised and validated programmes. The situation for accredited provision is discussed below (see paragraph 134).

In addition there are a number of other quality assurance processes such as the preliminary investigative visit (see above, paragraph 33), the provision of Memoranda of Programme Agreement and of Financial Agreement, and the appointment of a UWIC moderator to each programme.

127 Following initial approval a preliminary investigative visit is held at the proposed partner institution. The visiting panel must comprise, as a minimum, a chair independent of the school involved in the proposed collaboration, a member of the programme team and/or discipline area, and a recorder. The panel meets with members of the collaborating institution's senior management, members of its teaching and appropriate administrative staff, and the librarian and relevant heads of administrative services. A standard set of documentation is also required. The purpose of the visit is to ascertain that the collaborating institution is of an appropriate academic standing and is financially secure, that it has appropriate human and physical resources to run the programme and the arrangement is consistent with UWIC's mission, strategic plan and collaborative provision policy. For institutions with which UWIC already has collaborative arrangements, the requirement for a preliminary investigative visit can be waived following signed agreement from a member of the Vice-Chancellor's Board. Following a successful preliminary investigative visit the programme approval process takes place as for an on-campus course. The process includes a check of partner staff curricula vitae to ensure teaching staff are of an appropriate standard, any changes to staff following approval must then be submitted to, and approved by, the moderator.

128 Each collaborative programme is required to have both a Memorandum of Programme Agreement (stating the allocation of responsibilities between UWIC and the collaborating institution in regard to academic matters) and a Memorandum of Financial Agreement. Final draft versions of each of these must be approved by the Vice-Chancellor's Board and the Director of Finance respectively before a request for a validation event is submitted to the Academic Quality and Standards Board. The Memoranda of Agreement are signed as soon as possible after approval of the collaborative programme by the Academic Quality and Standards Board. The review team was informed that a range of appropriate draft memoranda have recently been made available. Memoranda are signed to cover a maximum of five years after which the contract will be renegotiated, but there is no specific institutional review process associated with this process.

129 The moderator is the key link between the collaborative partner and UWIC. Moderators report to their school's director of learning and teaching and are required to visit the partner institution at least twice a year. These visits must include attendance at the examination board and at least one programme committee. They act as mentor and adviser to the programme team and are responsible for ensuring compliance with UWIC's quality assurance processes. They are required to submit an annual report to the Academic Registry for presentation to the collaborating institution, to the relevant school director of learning and teaching and, in parallel, to the Collaborative Provision Committee. Reports address a range of issues appertaining to the quality and standards of the programme. Those available to the review team were generally evaluative in nature, noting where further development was needed. The Collaborative Provision Office provides a Moderator Handbook and brings

moderators together at least once each year to consider a range of issues such as the *Code of practice, Section 2*, and the sharing of good practice.

130 Students from collaborative partners who met with the review team were very positive about their experience saying that they felt themselves to be students of UWIC as well as of their own institutions. UWIC resources are made available to them including access to electronic material such as e-journals, and the team was informed that ensuring such access was available was part of the approval process.

131 In addition to the quality assurance processes outlined above, the review team noted a number of features about the FE2HE-UWIC Consortium. These included a regular meeting of the Consortium Executive Committee and Steering Group comprising chairs of governors and college principals from the consortium colleges with senior UWIC staff including the Vice-Chancellor. Meetings are well attended and cover a range of strategic and more detailed issues on the progress of the consortium, including the possibility of joint procurement. An annual seminar for collaborative partners is held and allows for discussion of common themes and issues. Close relationships between UWIC staff and those at these partner institutions were also evident with sharing of teaching and full involvement of the partner college in the revalidation of programmes and changes to the credit framework. Staff at these local colleges were also able to make use of the availability of staff development at UWIC. The team considered the creation of a community around FE2HE-UWIC to enhance the experience for HE students in partner colleges to be a feature of good practice.

132 Mechanisms for maintaining oversight of individual franchised and validated programmes appear generally appropriate, but some issues were noted by the review team about information provided by partners in both hardcopy and web formats indicating that there is a need for better institutional oversight of both marketing and student information (see below, paragraph 139). Award certificates do not always state the place of study, and while transcripts do so the provenance of articulated programmes was not always clear (see above, paragraph 66). As well as the issue discussed in paragraph 66, transcripts erroneously suggested that the first two years of study was BA Business Studies when it is, in fact, accredited (or articulated) the Learning Skills Council Diploma. Students also appeared confused about the availability of Merit and Distinction on franchised MBA programmes. The team believes there is a need for improved institutional oversight of these issues (see below, paragraph 133).

133 In contrast to the monitoring of individual programmes there is little in place to formally oversee relationships with the partner as a whole. Annual programme reports from collaborative programmes are discussed by programme committees, then sent to the relevant Director of Learning and Teaching for inclusion in the school overview and simultaneously to the Collaborative Provision Office. There is no clear mechanism for comparing issues across programmes originating from different UWIC schools but provided by the same partner, or across the totality of collaborative provision. Similarly, periodic reviews are focused on programmes so that the partner as a whole is not subject to scrutiny after the preliminary investigative visit. On the one hand this may lead to issues being overlooked and inconsistency between programmes running with the same partner. On the other hand, an unnecessary burden may be placed on

some partner institutions as certain aspects of their work become the subject of multiple reviews. The review team considers it advisable for UWIC to continue to develop mechanisms that ensure effective institutional oversight of, and consistent practice with respect to, all aspects of collaborative provision.

134 Unlike franchised and validated programmes, accredited provision is not currently subject to any form of annual review, even in cases where the provider is a private commercial institution without other formal academic quality assurance of its programmes. Such provision is initially subject to a mapping exercise with the corresponding UWIC programmes and any changes to these will result in a remapping. The Memoranda of Agreement for a number of these arrangements indicated that a moderator would be associated with them and would provide an overview on an annual basis and, further, that external examiners' reports would be made available to UWIC. This would seem an appropriate mechanism to maintain oversight, but it has not been carried out in practice and senior UWIC staff were unaware of this aspect of the Memoranda. The review team considers it advisable for the institution to review and revise the processes through which the ongoing quality and standards of provision accredited by UWIC are assured.

Section 3: The review investigations: published information

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

135 UWIC provides a variety of information for prospective and current students, both on and off-campus. Prospective students can access this material through the website, or by published prospectuses. Information made available to students before their arrival includes prospectuses (printed and online); joining packs which include a full profile of the programme; and open days. When they register, students have access to UWIC's intranet and the virtual learning environment where institutional information is available, including useful 'question and answer' material, and a Portable Document Format version of the current UWIC Student Handbook. Students on collaborative programmes in partner institutions are given relevant printed material, and they have access to UWIC's virtual learning environment.

136 The student written submission was very positive about the accuracy, completeness and reliability of information that UWIC publishes about itself, based on a specially-designed online survey and focus groups. Students whom the review team met (including students on collaborative programmes) confirmed that the information they receive before arrival and during their programme was accurate and useful, and that they knew where to find information of appeals and complaints procedures should they need to. Students also confirmed that every module has an accompanying handbook which contains details of coursework assignments, deadlines and marking criteria; most module handbooks are published on the virtual learning environment. In conclusion, the review team saw examples of printed and web-based information that were well set out, clear and relevant.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

137 Under its Welsh Language Scheme and statutory requirements, UWIC publishes key documents such as the prospectuses, website, Student Handbook and programme handbooks in both English and Welsh.

138 The Charter Systems Manual defines clear roles and responsibilities for all publications, including prospectuses, school/programme information, student handbooks, programme handbooks, induction of students, and approval of commentary placed on the Unistats website data. The Director of Communications and Marketing is responsible for signing off the UWIC prospectuses and website.

139 The review team found two examples of material published by collaborative partner institutions which were not entirely accurate - the London School of Commerce MBA website, which lacked clarity on which parts of the programme were awards of the Learning Skills Council and which were UWIC; and the Dimitris Perrotis College, Greece, Student Handbook 2007-2008, which contained factually incorrect information about the appeals process (see above, paragraph 132). Senior staff told the team that material published by partner institutions is approved by the Collaborative Provision Office, but accepted that this process was not currently operating appropriately.

140 As a result of viewing samples of published information, and from what it heard from students, the review team formed the view that, overall, reliance can be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of information published in various formats by UWIC, but that the accuracy of some of the material published by partner institutions needs to be improved.

Findings

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

141 UWIC has a range of systems and processes designed to assure the academic quality of awards. Formal responsibility for quality and standards rests with Academic Board, which devolves responsibility for the oversight of all UWIC's quality assurance activity to its sub-boards. The two boards with direct responsibility for learning and teaching are Academic Quality and Standards Board and Learning and Teaching Board, with responsibility for research and research degrees overseen by the Research and Enterprise Board. The Learning and Teaching Board and Research and Enterprise Board are mirrored within schools by the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Research and Enterprise Committee.

142 The school directors of learning and teaching are responsible for quality and standards in relation to taught programmes, and the Director of Research has responsibility for quality and standards in relation to research degrees. The school's Management and Planning Team has overall responsibility for quality and standards within the school.

143 UWIC see their systems for initial programme approval and validation as critical to quality assurance. Deans of school with their directors of learning and teaching have the responsibility for new programme development and planning. All proposals for new programmes leading to an award are subject to evaluation by the Initial Approval Panel before proceeding to validation for home programmes and to a preliminary investigative visit for collaborative programmes.

144 Annual programme review is central to UWICs quality assurance processes. However, the review team found that the quality of such reviews was variable and not always consistently considered or approved by programme committees. The review team considers it advisable for the institution to review and revise the process of annual monitoring of programmes to ensure it is consistently robust and effective.

145 UWIC's procedures for internal approval, monitoring and review were found, in the main, to involve sufficient externality to provide confidence in those procedures. However, a recurring theme was that, formally at least, little feedback or advice was sought from employers and graduates. The review team therefore considers it desirable for the institution to develop more consistent approaches to the formal involvement of graduates and employers in the design, validation and review of programmes.

146 The review team found, in relation to the quality assurance of collaborative provision, a number of features of good practice about the FE2HE-UWIC Consortium. These included a regular meeting of the Consortium Executive Committee and Steering Group comprising chairs of governors and college principals from the consortium colleges with senior UWIC staff including the Vice-Chancellor. In other areas of collaborative provision the team found areas which they considered it advisable for UWIC to address, particularly the management of the formal institutional oversight of partnership arrangements and the processes through which the ongoing quality and standards of provision accredited by UWIC are assured.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards

147 The standards of awards are set as part of the design and approval process. In the view of the review team this is in general effective, but enhancing the degree of externality in approval, particularly from employers, and ensuring that all modules which may form part of award bearing courses are subject to external scrutiny, would be beneficial.

148 Award regulations for taught programmes are presented at three levels - institutional, generic or programme type (for example, Foundation Degree or modular first degree) and individual programme. Generic regulations allow a degree of variation in, for example, the number of assessment resits available and this leads to a certain amount of inconsistency although the institution is actively seeking to reduce this.

149 The review team found varying experiences with timeliness of feedback. In some cases work had been returned too late to enable students to learn from feedback before submitting their next assignment. Variability in the quality of feedback was also seen as an issue by some students. The team considers it advisable that UWIC ensure feedback on assessments is provided to students in a clear, consistent and timely manner.

150 External examiners play a key part in monitoring ongoing standards. The review team considered that, overall, the procedures for their appointment and induction are appropriate. A range of processes is in place at programme, school and institutional level for responding to external examiner comment and for monitoring actions resulting from such comments; however, it is not entirely clear how these processes integrate. In particular, more analysis and evaluation might be encouraged at the school level, and the institution as a whole could benefit from using good practice identified by external examiners in individual programmes as part of its enhancement strategy.

151 Another feature of the ongoing oversight of standards is the annual monitoring process. Statistics on admission, retention, progression and awards are provided to programmes as part of this. However, there are some issues about the accuracy of these figures and, at present it is not possible to disaggregate cohort results according to indicators such as gender, ethnicity and disability. A new management information system is in the process of specification and the institution is advised to prioritise the development of this and of associated processes to allow accurate and timely monitoring of student data at all levels.

152 Collaborative provision is, in general, subject to the same processes for establishing and monitoring standards as that delivered on-campus. There is an exception to this for collaborative programmes which are 'accredited' to articulate with other UWIC provision. Although a mapping exercise is carried out when such provision is initially approved there is no process for ongoing monitoring and, hence, the institution is advised to review and revise the processes through which the ongoing quality and standards of accredited provision are assured.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for supporting learning

153 The Library and Information Services Unit provides a comprehensive service encompassing library, IT and study facilities on each of the institution's four campuses. Students are increasingly well supported by online resources both in terms of e-journals and subject specific resource packs, available to students studying on-campus and with partner institutions. The unit uses a number of sources of feedback on its activities including regular review meetings with schools. A change in culture, moving away, from one-to-one response to student enquiries and seeking rather to develop students' own learning and information retrieval skills, demonstrates an effective use of resource.

154 A virtual learning environment is in place and much appreciated by students. It offers a 'frequently asked questions' area and a study skills module as well as module specific material for all courses. Study skills support is also provided via in-course and open access workshops.

155 A range of systems is in place to provide a personal tutor system to students. The result is that all students have access to effective support, but this may not be in the form of regular meetings with a named tutor as described in the self-evaluation document. Guidance in making programme specific decisions is supported by information in programme and module handbooks, and there are additional facilities in place to support international students. Academic support for postgraduate research students is provided by the supervisory team which includes a minimum of two members.

156 Appropriate systems are in place for the appointment, appraisal and reward of academic staff and a proactive and strategic approach is taken to their support and development, making good use of available resources.

The use made by the institution of the Academic Infrastructure

157 The Institutional Review Group is tasked with checking UWIC's academic regulations, policies and procedures for alignment with sections of the *Code of practice* as these are written or revised. Where there is non-alignment any necessary changes are proposed through the Academic Quality and Standards Board and Academic Board. The general effectiveness of this approach was demonstrated through a number of examples where consideration of specific sections of the *Code* had led to change.

158 All taught programmes require programme specifications and the pro forma used for these includes a note of relevant subject benchmark statements with guidance that learning outcomes be considered for FHEQ, subject benchmarks and any professional body requirements. Where a proposed programme wishes to challenge the subject benchmark a case must be made to Academic Quality and Standards Committee and Academic Board, the review team was concerned that in one example where such a case had been made the rationale accepted was primarily non-academic.

159 The institution offers a significant number of Foundation Degrees, particularly through its partner colleges. Proposals for new provision of this kind must take account of the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*; existing programmes will be brought into line with this as they are reviewed.

160 Although the review team was concerned at the lack of academic justification for the institution's failure to map a particular programme against the admissions criteria of the relevant benchmark, it felt that, overall, the institution is making effective use of the Academic Infrastructure.

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

161 The self-evaluation document provided the review team with a fairly comprehensive view of the institution. In parts it benefited from an appropriate degree of reflection but it was not always accurate in describing certain practices which the team found to vary from those set down in the self-evaluation document and the Academic Handbook. Examples included the personal tutor system and the process of annual monitoring of programmes.

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

162 The Learning and Teaching Development Unit plays a central role in promoting the enhancement of learning and teaching. The review team found that the focus on the Learning and Teaching Development Unit as being there to support schools in achieving quality improvements was very positive, but was also made aware that embedding this activity in schools was crucial. As the Learning and Teaching Development Unit's relationship with schools becomes increasingly productive the review team considered it to be important that the Unit clarifies its structure and reinforces its supportive role, involving schools fully in its activities. Equally, the role of the schools' directors of learning and teaching was considered to be central to a productive relationship between the schools and the Unit, and to the wider enhancement agenda.

163 The Operational Plan for delivering the Quality Enhancement Strategy includes clearer enhancement activities such as the Teaching Fellowship scheme, which supports a wide range of staff carrying out evidence-based learning, teaching and assessment projects; external benchmarking projects; and strategies for linking teaching and research. However, other aspects of the plan are aimed at achieving levels of data analysis which might be expected routinely.

164 The review team noted that senior staff come together across the institution through a variety of subgroups and working groups such as the an annual 'debriefing' meeting of all chairs of examining boards. It was felt, therefore, that a feature of good practice was the mechanisms to bring senior staff together across the institution to promote consistency and contribute towards embedding enhancement.

Reliability of information

165 UWIC's published information is made available in English and Welsh, and it is accurate and useful for prospective and current students. The review team found that it could be confident in the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of information published in various formats by UWIC, but that the accuracy of some of the material published by partner institutions needs to be improved.

Features of good practice

166 The following features of good practice were noted:

- the mechanisms to bring senior staff together across the institution to promote consistency and contribute towards embedding enhancement (paragraph 32)
- the introduction and development of an effective system of school representatives to improve communication with, and involvement of, students (paragraphs 72 and 76)
- the creation of a community around FE2HE-UWIC to enhance the experience for HE students in partner colleges (paragraph 130).

Recommendations for action

167 Recommendations for action that the review team considers advisable:

- review and revise the process of annual monitoring of programmes to ensure it is consistently robust and effective (paragraphs 38 to 42)
- ensure that feedback on assessments is provided to students in a clear, consistent and timely manner (paragraph 54)
- prioritise the development of new management information systems and associated processes to allow accurate and timely monitoring of student data at all levels (paragraph 65)
- continue to develop mechanisms that ensure effective institutional oversight of, and consistent practice with respect to, all aspects of collaborative provision (paragraph 133)
- review and revise the processes through which the ongoing quality and standards of provision accredited by UWIC are assured (paragraph 134).

168 Recommendations for action that the review team considers desirable:

- develop more consistent approaches to the formal involvement of graduates and employers in the design, validation and review of programmes (paragraph 46).

Appendix

The University of Wales Institute, Cardiff's response to the Institutional review report

At UWIC, we very much welcome the positive outcome of the review and the features of good practice identified. The confidence expressed in the quality of our programmes and the academic standards of our awards is especially appreciated. The recommendations are equally welcomed, and we are pleased to note that these relate predominantly to areas we have already identified as a focus of continued action. The institutional review process was open, fair and constructive, and the report is supportive of the direction in which UWIC is moving forward in its strong commitment to the enhancement of our students' experience.

We are delighted that the reviewers highlighted the following areas of good practice, endorsing our structured approach to:

- the mechanisms to promote consistency across UWIC, and to contribute towards embedding enhancement
- an effective system of school student representatives, in addition to programme-level representation
- the creation of a community in relation to our FE2HE Consortium to enhance the experience for HE students in partner colleges.

The identification of these features of good practice, along with the range of positive comments included within the body of the report, provide a strong platform for continued enhancement of our provision.

Similarly, we also acknowledge the areas identified by the review team in their advisory and desirable recommendations, and we are already making progress to enhance further our existing systems and procedures for the effective, and efficient, management of quality and standards. An action plan is currently being developed to address these, using the helpful additional detail provided in the report. Progress on the actions will be monitored regularly by our QA Action Group, and timely reports will be submitted to the relevant formal boards.

Particular attention will be given to continuing to monitor and assure consistency of practice across UWIC in providing feedback to students on their assessments, the regular monitoring of accredited provision to confirm that the resources approved at the time of accreditation continue to be available, ensuring consistent practice in relation to all aspects of collaborative provision, and prioritising the development of new management information systems in terms of the production of data and the subsequent analysis, as well as positive actions where indicated. Related to this is the Annual Programme Report (APR) process described in our self-evaluation document as the 'cornerstone of UWIC's quality assurance process'. It is a self-critical, reflective quality check on programme specific data relating to key performance indicators, for which robust management information is essential. An APR Working Group had already been established at the time of the review. This was set up to consider changes to data collection, and to review the format of the report so that it is fully fit

for purpose, including for our partner institutions. There is further work to be done in streamlining the process, and the constructive comments in the review report provide a clear and detailed agenda for the working group's continued action.

To conclude, we continually strive for improvement and regard the institutional review as an important additional tool for the enhancement of our provision. We are already well on the way to addressing the report's recommendations, and we will continue to build upon and strengthen the features of good practice identified.