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Anyone for enhancement?

Is quality enhancement the new quality assurance? After many years of discussion and argument about whether or not, and if so how, an external agency should review the academic quality and standards of higher education, primarily for the purpose of accountability, the spotlight has now turned away from questions of accountability towards enhancement. A new and influential committee, the Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee (TQEC), originally sponsored by Universities UK and SCOP, but now with a much wider membership, has recently been looking at the roles of the three higher education organisations that have the enhancement of teaching and learning as their main concern - the ILT, HESDA and the LTSN. This is an important development, not least because it shows clearly that higher education is taking seriously its stated commitment to continuous improvement (ie, always trying to doing things better).

One of the interesting features to have emerged from TQEC's work is the distinction it has drawn between 'quality assurance' and 'quality enhancement'. Although this has been done mainly for convenience - so as to recognise the particular and unique role of the Agency in the quality assurance landscape - it nevertheless raises the question once again of what quality assurance actually is, and whether we in the Agency have any part to play in the enhancement of quality in higher education.

In the world at large, 'quality assurance' describes all aspects of the ways in which organisations try to make sure that their activities are fully fit for their intended purposes, that they are doing 'what it says on the tin'. The reasons for organisations to want to do this are numerous: it may be to satisfy themselves that they are meeting the needs of their clients, or to account to paymasters for financial assistance received. It may be to gain a marketing advantage over their competitors, or simply a wish to be sure that they are doing a fully professional job. All these reasons can apply to higher education. Additionally, though, in higher education quality assurance activities give institutions a means of finding out whether their academic awards and quality are comparable with those of other institutions and are meeting national expectations. To this end, external review or evaluation, whether undertaken by an agency like QAA or by consultants, offers an independent perspective, a mirror without the distortion caused by familiarity. Crucially, in this view of the world, continuous improvement - enhancement - is an integral part of quality assurance. In a mature and reflective institution, the self-knowledge that internal and external review and evaluation provide will lead, inexorably, to the conscious recognition of strengths and weaknesses and the identification of areas for improvement and development.

If accountability and enhancement are key elements of quality assurance, then they should be inextricably linked, not placed in opposition to one another. Unfortunately, neither 'assurance' nor 'enhancement' carries a simple definition. Both words are open to wide interpretation. But I do not see the opposing of the words 'assurance' and 'enhancement' by the TQEC as an attempt to create a new dichotomy, formally removing the latter from the purview of the former. It is, as I have already indicated, more a matter of convenience, a way of describing the different principal responsibilities of relevant agencies. In using these words in the way it does, however, the TQEC has highlighted the question of the Agency's role as an enhancement agency. Does it have an enhancement function? If so, is it different from HESDA's, or ILT's or the LTSN's?

In my view the Agency does have an important role to play in the enhancement of the quality of higher education. It is different from the roles of the other three agencies, but it is very much built into our work and strongly influences the way we do things. Institutions are responsible for their enhancement activities and it is not our job to try to improve or develop teaching and learning directly. Our task is to help institutions improve the management of their academic quality and standards, by providing them with opportunities to know and understand themselves better, making available information about how other institutions set about the task, and acting as a catalyst for the development of new approaches to this area of their responsibility. Indirectly this should lead to more effective learning and better teaching, and of course we hope it does. But its principal purpose has a different focus.

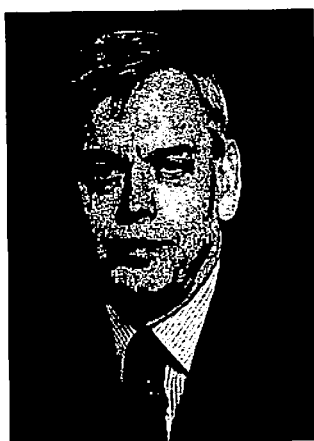
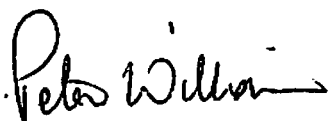
How are we going to meet our enhancement responsibilities? We have, through our reviewing activities, access to a great amount of information about good and not so good institutional practice in the assurance of quality and standards, and we intend to make this more readily and regularly available. We will be looking for developing trends, interesting and/or important messages that are emerging from our various review reports, and new quality assurance challenges that are facing institutions, and we will relay these back to the sector through publications, seminars and discussion groups. The recent round of meetings to look at the external examining system and programme specifications, reported on elsewhere in this bulletin, gives an idea of the sort of things we will be providing. Another series of meetings on programme specifications is planned to start in December. And while we very much hope that institutions will find these useful, we are sure they will be of great use to us, as we attempt to understand more fully the ideas and practices that institutions are themselves developing.

To do this we must make best use of our own resources and so we are reorganising the Agency's internal structure, removing the barriers between our various internal groupings, encouraging inter-group activity and making best use of the impressive knowledge, expertise and talent that our colleagues bring to their work. The development of our new, more active liaison programme with institutions will also help us to achieve this goal. There is more about this too in later pages.

The one thing we will not be doing is duplicating what is already done by others. We will, though, be co-operating with other agencies, offering what we hope will be perceptive contributions to the debates that they will be leading. Higher education appears to be facing an even more uncertain future than it expected. New challenges to the assurance of quality and standards are likely to emerge. Through its enhancement activities we will try to discover the new questions and look for some new answers.

Peter Williams

19 October 2002



Institutional audit

Result of consultation on the draft *Handbook for Institutional Audit*

In April 2002, we circulated the draft *Handbook for institutional audit* (the *Handbook*) in England, and asked for responses by mid-June. A total of 74 responses were received, the majority (60) from education institutions. A summary report on the outcome, with an indication of how we have addressed matters raised, was enclosed with Peter Williams' circular letter (CL09/02) of 1 August 2002. For more detail please refer to our web site*.

Most responses to the draft *Handbook* were favourable and respondents commended the proposals. There were, however, areas where doubts or concerns recurred. These were:

- discipline audit trails (DATs);
- the roles of students in the process; and
- information and documentation requirements.

Other topics commented on were:

- collaborative provision;
- the particular needs of specialist institutions; and
- representations and complaints against the Agency's judgements and management of the audit process.

In the light of the responses, which were very helpful, we have reviewed and revisited the *Handbook*, clarified the text and removed ambiguities where necessary. In some instances we changed our original proposals. For other topics, we will bring the concerns to the attention of auditors during their training. There are some important matters of principle that need additional discussion, but these were not appropriate for inclusion in an operational handbook. These matters are dealt with in CL09/02.

Progress to date

All institutions have been contacted about the year and term for their audit, and the full schedule of audits for the transitional period 2002-05 has now been agreed. We will contact institutions due to be audited in 2003-04 to ask for suggested dates for briefing visits and audit visits. In 2002-03, 25 institutions will be audited and many have already had their preliminary meetings. The first briefing visit will be conducted in December.

We asked for nominations for auditors and audit secretaries at the beginning of August, with a very short deadline for responses. We are extremely grateful to everyone who put themselves forward for these roles and managed to respond so quickly. We are unlikely to be in a position to let everyone know the outcome of the appointing process until later this month, but letters will be sent to all nominees and nominators informing them of the outcome.

The tight timescale has meant that at the same time as working through the nominations, we are also in the process of allocating audit teams. The allocation of an individual to a team is, in part, based on their current discipline-level experience in a particular JACS code appropriate for the institution being audited. This means we have had to consider nominations in some JACS codes before others. All those who have been asked to join a team have been screened against the requirements for the role, but some individuals will be approached to take part in training and to be part of an audit team before all the nominations representing other JACS codes have been considered.

Once the consideration of all applications has been completed, the successful nominees will be added to the register of auditors and audit secretaries. Training places will be assigned on the basis of allocation to teams, so not everyone on the register will be trained in the current year. The first training events took place in October and we hope that all audit teams for 2002-03 will be trained by the end of January 2003.

Points for discussion

During the consultation process, small and specialist institutions raised questions about how the process would relate to them. We aim to ensure that the process reflects their size and character, whilst making certain that judgements are consistent, reliable and comparable with those of other HEIs.

Some of the points emerging from preliminary meetings have been about the place of DATs within the audit process. CL09/02 makes it quite clear that DATs are not full subject reviews, and that the resources devoted to them, either by the audit team or by the institution, are quite different to subject review. The main focus of an audit team will be on the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of its programmes, and the academic standards of its awards. DATs will help teams make their judgement on the institution as a whole. Whilst they are an important part of the process, DATs should be considered as part of the process rather than a separate or predominant element. It is important to remember this point so that the balance between the elements of audit is not lost.

As we build up experience of the audit process we will keep the sector informed of the lessons being learned.

Nicola Channon

*www.qaa.ac.uk/public/inst_audit_hbook/institutional_audit.htm

Subject-level reviews

During academic year 2002-03, we will be carrying out a range of reviews at the subject-level:

- academic review of subjects in a small number of HEIs in Scotland (see page 6) and England;
- academic review of subjects of directly-funded higher education in further education colleges (HE in FECs) in England;
- Welsh engagements (see page 8);
- developmental engagements in HEIs in England;
- special reviews of foundation degrees in England and in Northern Ireland (see page 5).

Many institutions have responded to our invitation to nominate specialist reviewers and we are grateful to them. Applicants are being screened against the person specification and we have started to invite some applicants to specialist reviewer training. We would still like to receive specialist reviewer applications for any subject and, in particular:

- Agriculture, forestry, agricultural and food sciences;
- Archaeology;
- Architecture, architectural technology and landscape architecture;
- Building and surveying;
- Chemistry;
- Communications, media, film and television studies;
- Dance, drama and performance arts;
- Linguistics;
- Mathematics, statistics and operational research;
- Music;
- Philosophy;
- Psychology;
- Town and country planning.

More details and application forms are available from our web site at:

www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutqaa/appointments/contents.htm
If you have further queries, please email h.markham@qaa.ac.uk or telephone 01452 557036.

Academic review of subjects of directly-funded higher education in further education colleges (HE in FECs) in England

From January to July 2002, 73 reviews of HE in FECs were conducted using the method set out in the *Handbook for academic review*. Colleges have responded well to the introduction of this method. Most reviews resulted in a judgement of confidence in academic standards. All colleges achieved a judgement of either approved or commendable for each of the three aspects of the quality of learning opportunities: teaching and learning; student progression; and learning resources. In the few cases

where the reviewers did not have confidence in standards, they found problems with student assessment. These included assessment questions or briefs that did not enable the students' achievement of the intended learning outcomes to be tested; the inconsistent application of marking criteria; a lack of evidence of moderation or verification; and feedback which was so perfunctory that it did not assist students in their learning. This follows a pattern seen in the outcomes of the previous method of subject review, where reviewers frequently found scope for improvement in student assessment in FECs and HEIs.

We value the comments provided by colleges and reviewers on their experience of the review method. Following these comments, and our own review of the effectiveness of the process, adjustments will be made to the training and guidance of reviewers. In particular, we need to reinforce the importance of implementing the process in an open and collegial manner. This can include providing clear feedback to colleges at regular stages of the review, emphasising the flexibility inherent in the method, and increasing the reviewers' awareness of Edexcel procedures. The training programme has been revised to take account of these points.

Despite our enthusiasm to recruit specialist reviewers who currently teach HE-level programmes in FECs, we continue to be disappointed at the small number of nominations we receive. This makes it difficult for us to achieve our aim of including at least one specialist reviewer from an FEC in each team. We are fortunate, however, that we have a number of experienced reviewers from HEIs who have worked in FECs at earlier stages of their teaching careers.

We are still receiving self-evaluation documents that are not sufficiently self-critical, and do not have the evaluation of quality and standards supported by evidence or clear references to evidence. Self-evaluations make an effective basis for review when they demonstrate, among other things, on-going rigorous analysis and self-reflection. A good self-evaluation is the key to a review that is not unduly intrusive.

In 2002-03, 85 reviews of HE in FECs will take place and arrangements are in hand. For further information, please email p.mccracken@qaa.ac.uk or telephone 01452 557172.

Developmental engagements

The *Developmental engagements: guidance note** discusses the process at each key stage. This includes planning; self-evaluation; student written submission; team composition including the role of the institutional nominee; preparatory meetings; visits; and judgements and reporting. The *guidance note* helps institutions prepare for the visits and will support the training of developmental engagement team members.

Developmental engagements will take place between February and July 2003 and we are discussing the schedule of visits with institutions. This includes confirmation of the dates for submission of self-evaluations. Institutions have received letters, requesting an institutional nominee for each developmental engagement. Institutional nominees will be invited to a one-day training programme to help them to prepare for their role.

We are also preparing a leaflet about the student contribution (a brief written submission) to developmental engagements. The focus of the submission should be on the internal review mechanism of the programme, cluster of programmes, or discipline area, and on the quality and standards of the education provided. The leaflet will be sent to each institution, to pass on to the relevant representative student body.

If you have any queries about developmental engagements, please email a.biscoe@qaa.ac.uk or telephone 01452 557105.

Academic review of subjects

Academic reviews will take place in a small number of HEIs between February and July 2003, and we have been contacting each institution to agree the date of the initial meeting for their academic review(s). We will also confirm the dates for submission of self-evaluations for these reviews, invite institutions to identify a subject review facilitator for their review(s), provide briefings for facilitators to prepare them for the responsibilities of this role, and invite representatives from each HEI to attend a briefing on the method.

To help the institutions that will be having academic reviews of subjects, we have used the experience gained from reviews in HEIs in Scotland, and in HE in FECs, to provide advice that supplements the *Handbook for academic review*. The *Handbook for academic review (QAA 2000): user's guide to the academic review of subjects in higher education institutions in the transitional period 2002-05¹* should be read in conjunction with the *Handbook for academic review*. The *guide* has been written primarily to help HEIs in England to prepare for their first experience of this method. The *guide* also suggests ways of using subject-level reviews as a preparation for institutional audit.

If you have any questions about academic reviews of subjects, please email a.christou@qaa.ac.uk or telephone 01452 557113.

Gillian Hayes

Foundation degrees

In 2002-03 the Agency, commissioned by HEFCE, will undertake a special review of a sample of foundation degrees. The sample will include both HEFCE-funded prototypes; those funded through additional student numbers and those funded internally. The criteria for selection of the sample are geographical location; subjects and sectors; student mode of attendance and cohort size; types of institution; and consortia size. There will be between 35 and 38 reviews.

We are designing a review process specifically for the foundation degree. As part of the review design process, we established a consultative group of course leaders, foundation degree consortium coordinators, and others involved in foundation degrees. This group has advised us on ways of effectively achieving the review aims with the least burden to providers.

For foundation degrees funded by HEFCE as 'prototypes', the self-evaluation report is part of a more extensive end-of-project final report. This report of all prototype foundation degree providers, whether in the sample or not, is required by HEFCE.

*www.qaa.ac.uk/public/inst_audit_hbook/dev_eng_guidance.htm

¹www.qaa.ac.uk/public/inst_audit_hbook/subject_review_guidance.htm

The self-evaluation report (SER) forms the starting point of our review of foundation degree programmes. A handbook will be published on our web site in November and will also be available in hard copy.

The review period will last some five weeks. During this time the review team, typically one review coordinator and three subject specialists, will spend two days, either consecutively or separately, visiting different parts of the programme. Provision across a number of sites may attract extra days. The review team will meet the consortium team, the subject team at one teaching site, and normally visit at least two places of work-based learning. Other features are common to most Agency review processes: peer review; meetings with current students; scrutiny of documentation and student work; and the nomination of facilitators.

HEFCE has requested that the reviews generate two threshold judgements: the 'emerging standards and emerging academic achievements of students' and the 'quality of the student learning experience,

including monitoring and enhancement'. The reports from this review will not be published. They will remain confidential to the consortium or institution, HEFCE and the Agency, and will be made available to the HEFCE evaluators (an independent group appointed by HEFCE). Evaluators will use the information from the SERs and generated by the reviews to reduce any additional burden on institutions. We will produce an overview report in which no institution will be identified.

We are offering briefing for facilitators from the programmes under review, and special one-day training for coordinators and subject specialists who will undertake foundation degree reviews. This is in

addition to the normal academic reviewer training. We welcome applications from suitably qualified staff who have experience of foundation degree and/or further education colleges (FECs). Late applications from colleagues who can undertake the training this autumn will also be accepted. The application form can be found on our web site at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutqaa/appointments/contents.htm

This is an opportunity for consortia and institutions to identify good practice and innovative features and to share these with the academic community.

Penny McCracken

Subject overview reports

In July 2002, 11 subject overview reports were published:

- Archaeology;
- Business and management;
- Celtic studies;
- Classics and ancient history;
- Economics;
- Education;
- Hospitality, leisure, recreation, sport and tourism;
- Librarianship and information management;
- Philosophy;
- Politics;
- Theology and religious studies.

Draft reports were written at workshops held in our Gloucester office. The workshops involved groups of subject specialists, who provided major contributions to the reports, and each subject group received guidance from review coordinator.

These subject overview reports have added significance, as they mark the end of the old method of subject review.

The reports are available on our web site at: www.qaa.ac.uk/revreps/subjrev/overviews.htm or in hard copy from Linney Direct (see back cover).

Sarah Davies

The work of the Agency in Scotland

Developing the new enhancement-led arrangements for quality

Consultation on future arrangements

Since the publication of *higher quality 10*, the response to the consultation on future arrangements for quality assurance in Scotland has been published.

From the responses, it is clear that the main features of the proposed enhancement-led model were widely welcomed. The new, distinctive, model will bring together quality assurance and enhancement, and comprises five integrated elements:

- institutions internal procedures for quality assurance and enhancement;
- a full and supported involvement of students in internal and external quality processes;
- a series of quality enhancement engagements;
- the generation of a range of public information on quality; and
- an enhancement-led institutional audit process.

An enhancement-led model

The Quality Working Group (QWG) devised the enhancement-led model. The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) convened the QWG, with membership from students, Universities Scotland, the Agency and SHEFC. The QWG has now been re-convened to oversee the further development and implementation of the overall model.

Within this context, the Agency is developing the enhancement-led approach to audit. This development is based on the consensus reached in Scotland that:

- institutions in Scotland manifestly take a responsible approach to the maintenance of quality and standards;
- ownership of quality and standards issues rests with the institutions and not with SHEFC or the Agency;
- institutions are committed to the principle of continuous quality enhancement;
- students should have a major involvement in internal and external quality processes; and

- students and other stakeholders should have access to relevant public information about the nature and quality of provision.

Linked to this consensus, the main aims of the enhancement-led audit are:

- to provide an independent view of the effectiveness of an institution's strategy for managing the quality of the student learning experience and the standards of their awards;
- to provide an independent view of the robustness of institutional mechanisms, including subject review mechanisms, for providing accurate, complete and fair public information;
- to support each institution in the further enhancement of the quality of the student learning experience;
- to support the sector collectively through the sharing of good practice in the enhancement of the student learning experience and the standards of their awards; and
- to promote the good standing of Scottish higher education throughout the UK, the rest of Europe and in the wider international context.

The Steering Committee

A Steering Committee has been appointed to support the development of the new method. The role of the Steering Committee reflects the fact that the new approach to quality in Scotland has emerged from close collaboration between Universities Scotland, the Agency in Scotland and student representatives, and the wish to ensure that this collaborative approach is maintained. The membership of the Steering Committee is:

Duncan Cockburn, Student's Association
University of Aberdeen

Alan Davidson, Director of Quality Assurance
University of Dundee

Dr Ron Emanuel, Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching)
University of Glasgow

Dr Bill Harvey, Deputy Director Quality
and Learning Innovation, SHEFC

Professor Neil Keeble, Deputy Principal
University of Stirling

Professor Terry Mayes, Head of Learning and
Educational Development
Glasgow Caledonian University

Dr Rita McAllister, Vice-Principal
Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama

Donna McMillan, Senior Assistant Registrar
University of Paisley

Professor David Ross, Director for the Enhancement of
Learning and Teaching, University of Abertay Dundee

Gerard Madill - Policy Adviser (Observer)
Universities Scotland

Supporting the introduction of the new framework

The draft Handbook for enhancement-led audit will be prepared by the end of December 2002. During the preparation period, there will be workshops for both the sector and student groups. In addition, we will continue to liaise closely with the Universities Scotland Teaching Quality Forum and the QAA Scotland Student Forum. Formal consultation will take place on the draft handbook between early January and the end of February 2003, with a consultation event at the beginning of February. The final version of the handbook will be published by Easter 2003. A dissemination event is being planned for May 2003.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications' Framework (SCQF) and Lifelong Learning

At the time of writing, the final report of the Scottish Parliament's Inquiry into Lifelong Learning had not been published, and the Parliamentary debate on the Inquiry's findings not yet taken place. It is clear, however, from the interim report of the Inquiry that the SCQF is likely to play a central role in the future arrangements for lifelong learning. In January 2003, the Scottish Executive's Strategy for Lifelong Learning will be announced. On 16 and 17 December 2002, the SCQF annual conference will provide an opportunity to hear the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Iain Gray MSP) address this topic. The main theme and aim of the conference is supporting the implementation of the SCQF. In December 2002, a SCQF 'National Implementation Plan' will be published. The Plan, which will be one of the key conference papers, will set out the general timetable and arrangements for implementing the SCQF across the education and training sectors in Scotland.

In addition to Iain Gray, key speakers include the Deputy Minister for Health, Mary Mulligan MSP; Andrew Cubie, Chair of the Joint Advisory Committee for the SCQF; Professor John Harper, Chair of the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access; Heather Jones, Scottish Executive, Chair of the SCQF Implementation Group; Rami Okasha, President, NUS Scotland; Iain McMillan, Director, CBI Scotland; Professor Charles Munn, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland; Fraser Patrick, Director, Neighbourhood Resources and Development, Dundee City Council; and Linda McKay, Principal, Falkirk College of Further and Higher Education. Workshops will provide an opportunity for participants, from across the sectors and from a wide range of bodies involved in supporting learning, to discuss and plan the introduction and use of the Framework.

If you wish to receive further information about the conference please email your request to scqf.conference@sqa.org.uk

Academic Review of subjects in Scotland

Reflecting on reviews 2001-02

2001-02 has been the second year of academic review of subjects in Scotland, with 49 reviews completed, and 48 reports published at the time of writing. These reports can be found on our web site at: www.qaa.ac.uk/revreps/acrev/scotintro.htm

The outcomes of the 2001-02 reviews confirm the generally high quality of higher education provision in Scotland. Reviewers judged the academic standards of the awards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. Of the 48 reviews published, reviewers made judgements on standards in 47 of these (in Scotland, standards judgements are not made on HND/C provision).

In 46 of these reviews, judgements of confidence in academic standards were delivered, and there was a judgement of no confidence in only one review.

On the quality of learning opportunities, the majority of provision is commendable in the three aspects of provision evaluated: teaching and learning (90 per cent); student progression (82 per cent); and learning resources (84 per cent). All other judgements approved the provision and no failing provision was identified.

We are analyzing the key learning points from the two years of academic review in Scotland. We hope to disseminate this information, and that it will be helpful to the sector in general and form a useful background to developing the new enhancement-led framework outlined above. In addition, this analysis will help us to maintain an effective approach to the academic review of subjects for those institutions in Scotland that will still be involved in this process.

Academic reviews of subjects 2002-03

Within the new arrangements in Scotland, external subject review will be confined to the new HEIs that have not had the opportunity to demonstrate the robustness of their internal systems. During 2002-03, four reviews are scheduled at UHI Millennium Institute, and three at Bell College. In addition, and at the request of the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD), we will also start a programme of academic reviews at the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC), with the first subject review anticipated in spring 2003.

David Bottomley
Ailsa Crum
Janice Ross
Norman Sharp

The work of the Agency in Wales

Discipline-based reviews

Higher quality 10 described the aims and purposes of the discipline-based reviews currently being conducted in Welsh institutions. Final draft reports have been issued, in confidence, to institutions on the five reviews conducted during the last academic session. By December 2002, the remaining 20 reviews in the programme will be completed and reports issued early in 2003. Initial responses from institutions and departments that have been involved suggest that the reviews have been a practical and helpful basis for re-engagement with external scrutiny. For the Agency, the processes and procedures adopted are contributing to the transitional arrangements currently being developed for other UK regions. If you have any queries about these reviews, please email Pat Le Rolland, p.lerolland@qaa.ac.uk

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) on the Quality Assurance and Standards Framework for Wales

HEFCW's consultation paper (W02/50HE) has been issued to higher and further education institutions in Wales, and the Agency is working closely with the Council on how the proposals might be translated into practice. In January 2003, we will distribute an operational description of the review process following consideration by the working group (set up by HEFCW)

of the responses to the consultation. On 7 November 2002, a national seminar will be held to consider how higher education programmes delivered in further education institutions in Wales may be reviewed within the overarching proposals for a Quality Assurance and Standards Framework. This seminar has been organised by us in association with HEFCW and Fforwm (the representative body of all further education colleges in Wales).

Advisory Committee for Wales

Membership of the committee has been established and the first meeting will be held on 20 November 2002 at UWIC, Cardiff.

The members are:

Professor Colin Baker, Welsh Language Board
Professor Anthony Chapman, Higher Education Wales (HEW)
Mr Trevor Clark, Credit and Qualifications Framework - Wales
Mr David Finch, Fforwm
Professor Tony Hazell, Public sector employers
Professor Angela John, HEFCW
Ms Liz Kidd HMI, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools - Wales (ESTYN)

Dr Frances Mannsaker, University of Glamorgan
 Mr David McParlin, University of Wales
 Professor Ken Reid, University of Wales
 Professor Michael Scott,
 Higher Education Wales (HEW)
 Mr John Williams, Curriculum and
 Qualifications Authority - Wales (ACCAC)

There are three vacancies - another appointment by HEFCW, the NUS (Wales), and a member to represent the interests of private sector employers. There are also members with observer status representing HEFCW, UUK and the Welsh Assembly Government. Mr Christopher Kenyon, the Chairman of the Agency's Board, will chair the inaugural meeting of the Committee.

Welsh Language Scheme

At the Agency's Board meeting scheduled for November 2002 a draft Welsh Language Scheme, in accordance with the terms of the Welsh Language Act (1993), will be considered. With the Board's agreement, the scheme will be finalised, and in early 2003 we will conduct a consultation with higher and further education institutions and other relevant bodies in Wales. In May 2003, we intend to submit our Scheme to the Welsh Language Board (WLB) for its approval. Following its approval, the Scheme will be launched formally in July 2003.

Guidance on examining and assessment

On 23 October 2002, a national seminar to launch the guidelines for effective practice in examining and assessing in a language other than the language of tuition was held at Llandrindod Wells. The guidelines are a supplement to precept 14 in Section 6 of the *Code of practice on Assessment of students*; students in Wales can use Welsh for examination and assessment purposes if it is their preferred choice.

Liaison with relevant organisations and bodies in Wales

We continue to liaise and strengthen our relationships with relevant organisations and bodies in Wales. There are formal, quarterly meetings with HEFCW to monitor progress against the annual service agreement, as well as frequent informal contact. There is also regular liaison with the office of HEW. During the last six months, meetings have taken place with ESTYN, ACCAC, the Care Council Wales, Health Professions Wales, as well as with the education and health departments of the Welsh Assembly Government.

For further information please email the officer for Wales at m.laugharne@qaa.ac.uk or telephone 01452 557139.

Mike Laugharne

NHS Prototype reviews

During 2002, we conducted six prototype reviews of programmes of nursing, midwifery, health visiting, and allied health professions in six HEIs in England. This work has been done under contract with the Department of Health (DoH), which is working in partnership with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the Health Professions Council (HPC) and NHS Workforce Development Confederations (WDC).

The National Health Service (NHS) is a major funder of higher education, largely through contracts with WDCs and education providers. The NHS funds tuition costs, as well as student support costs, for pre-registration programmes in nursing and midwifery, degree programmes for allied health professions and some post-registration programmes. Through the provisions of practice placements, NHS Trusts are co-providers of professional programmes of higher education.

The prototype reviews have been based on the Agency's academic review except that:

- they focus on a wide range of multiprofessional health care provision;

- they include scrutiny of practice as well as HEI-based learning;
- they use key government initiatives such as national service frameworks as points of reference; and
- they operate on behalf of all stakeholder groups.

Review teams have comprised practitioners as well as academics. Team members have been nominated by the various organisations that are involved with, and are responsible for, the provisions of programmes, namely NMC, HPC, WDCs, employers and HEIs. The prototypes have also made full use of external reference points including statutory requirements. In common with the Agency's methodology, reviewers also use *Subject benchmark statements*, the *Code of practice* and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

The following *Subject benchmark statements* have been produced as part of this activity:

dietetics; occupational therapy; orthoptics; physiotherapy; podiatry; prosthetics and orthotics; radiography; speech and language therapy; health visiting; midwifery; nursing.

These have been produced to a standard format and within an emerging shared health professions framework.

We are in process of completing an evaluation report on the prototype reviews, which will be disseminated widely. This will be on our web site by the end of this month. The DoH has commissioned an external evaluation, which will form part of their consultation exercise. During 2003-06, the DoH expects a full roll out of major reviews.

All participants in the prototypes have contributed positively and enthusiastically. The Agency's team and the DoH Quality Assurance team have been helped in this process by a hardworking Steering Group that represents all stakeholders. A number of

significant learning points have been drawn from the prototype experiences, and these will inform revisions to the review method. There will be further opportunities for stakeholders to comment on the proposed method during the remainder of 2002.

There remains a significant amount of work to complete the project by the end of 2002. The success of the prototypes has been due to the commitment and contributions of the reviewers, the subject staff and practitioners in the Trusts, the review coordinators, HEI and WDC staff, the NMC and HPC and the DoH team.

For further information please email p.lerolland@qaa.ac.uk or telephone 01452 557018.

Pat Le Rolland

Student conference on institutional audit

On 28 August 2002 a conference was held at Woburn House, London, for officers and staff from student unions in England on the new process of institutional audit. The conference was jointly hosted by the Association of Managers in Student Unions (AMSU), the National Union of Students (NUS), SCOP, UUK, and the Agency. A total of 104 delegates attended, with 25 student union managers and 79 sabbatical officers. Over 60 HEIs were represented.

The day provided an opportunity for student unions to discuss their potential role within audit - with each other and with members of the host organisations. As the Agency will not be providing formal training for students and their representatives, the conference was a vital part of ongoing support and information sharing. Among the themes identified for future debate by the student officers and staff were student representation, the content of the student written submission, practicalities of audit, resource implications and working in partnership with HEIs.

The conference opened with an introduction by Greg Wade (SCOP, currently seconded to UUK), followed by a presentation on institutional audit by Peter Williams, Chief Executive of the Agency. Delegates also participated in workshops, which focused on starting discussion within student unions and sharing ideas about obtaining constructive student feedback. Key representatives of the student unions ran most workshops.

The final plenary provided delegates with an opportunity to discuss the topics and queries that had been raised in the workshops. Andy Parsons (Chair, AMSU) opened the final plenary and was a member of the discussion panel alongside Mandy Telford (President NUS), James Groves (Secretary of the National Postgraduate Committee) Greg Wade and Peter Williams.

For further information please email l.mcaulay@qaa.ac.uk

Lynne McAulay

Round table meetings on external examining and programme specifications

Following the publication of the *Final report* of the Task Group for Information on Quality and Standards in Higher Education (the *Cooke report*)*, and the Agency's new approach to audit and review, we collaborated with UUK and SCOP to organise a series of round-table discussion meetings on external examining and programme specifications. The meetings took place between May and July 2002. More than 400 academics, administrators and

managers attended, representing higher and further education, and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. The meetings started with a brief, overarching presentation, followed by extensive detailed discussions in small breakout groups. These breakout sessions were the focus of the meetings, as the purpose was to provide a forum for informed discussion and feedback between the institutions, the Agency and representative bodies. Detailed notes

*www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2002/02%5F15.htm

were taken at all of the breakout and plenary sessions. These have provided the basis for an interim report requested by Professor Sir Ron Cooke (Chair of the Task Group for Information on Quality and Standards in Higher Education), briefing notes to Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and others, and papers to the Boards of the Agency, UUK and SCOP.

External examining

The meetings indicated that there is overall confidence in the external examining system, that it is still considered to be of significant value, but that in some discipline areas it is becoming more difficult to recruit examiners. The discussions demonstrated a great diversity of practice (more than most contributors had realised existed). Greater clarity in defining specific purposes, roles and responsibilities could strengthen the system, and provide greater reassurance to external audiences that it was indeed providing an 'independent guarantee' of an institution's standards.

Topics raised included:

- section 4 (External examining) of the *Code of practice* (generally well received);
- the range of roles required of external examining and external examiners (very wide, and requiring knowledge and skills of a subject specialist and/or an assessment specialist);
- the proposed (Cooke) pro forma for public reporting of external examiners' summary comments (considerable concern about the nature of the reports, their number, and their likely value in providing useful information);
- induction or training for external examiners (finding a balance between the requirements for effective action and imposing too great a burden; this may impact on recruitment that is already difficult in some areas; the benefits, but mostly difficulties, of a register or accreditation of external examiners);
- use of the standards infrastructure (programme specifications, *Subject benchmark statements*, qualification descriptors) in external examining (finding a balance between meeting responsibilities and additional work burdens).

Programme specifications

The majority of participants agreed, sometimes slightly grudgingly, that programme specifications had proved to be useful tools in the development of academic programmes. Although it was recognised that the *Dearing Report* had intended the programme specifications to provide information for students, the development and preparation for the academic review method had led many to write programme specifications with an academic audience in mind. This approach had led to many examples of good practice/enhancement, and changing policy at this

stage would create difficulties for many. Although the *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications* could be improved, significant revision should be postponed until further detailed discussions had taken place.

Topics raised included:

- What is a programme specification? Is it dynamic or static? Should it describe what the institution is offering to students, or what is expected of students before they can be awarded a qualification? Does it set a threshold level or describe typical achievement, or both?
- Who is the intended audience (prospective students, current students, course providers, examiners, reviewers)? Can one (multi-layered) document fulfil a number of functions?
- Some HEIs have developed an institutional pro forma, others have allowed disciplines to produce their own programme specifications. Some institutions have progressive introduction of programme specifications as part of their periodic review process; others have gone for a 'big bang' approach.
- Programme specifications are viewed as valuable core documents; they encourage coherence in programme design (particularly for multi- and interdisciplinary programmes).
- What are the publication/information requirements of HEFCE?

The overwhelming view was that, despite the Dearing recommendation that the programme specification should be written for student information, they would continue to be most useful if prepared primarily as an academic tool. The conclusions reached were:

- The general purpose(s) and anticipated audience(s) must be clarified as soon as possible.
- There is serious concern at moving to the Dearing concept of the programme specification primarily for information for students.
- If a detailed course document is required for student information, it should be provided after discussions that include, for example, students, schools, sixth form colleges, further education colleges; but this should not be called a programme specification.

A fuller account of the meetings on external examining and programme specifications can be found on our web site at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/meetings02/pspec_ec.htm

UUK, SCOP and the Agency found the discussion meetings and the issues raised extremely useful. This view was widely reflected in the evaluation sheets completed by those who attended and contributed.

Future meetings on programme specifications
 Programme specifications are essential to information requirements and the assurance of quality and standards; a further series of meetings is being jointly organised to support their implementation. There will be regional and London-based meetings held over two days, but with different purposes and overlapping audiences for each day. The first day will seek to examine and share experiences of those practitioners who have or are developing programme specifications. The second day will consider

programme specifications in relation to the other academic reference points of the standards infrastructure and how they fulfil their various roles in, for example, providing public information, in internal and external review, and supporting partnerships. The first meetings will be held at (UUK) (London) on 17 and 18 December. Further details are available from f.crozier@qaa.ac.uk

Nick Harris

Liaison officers: an update

In *higher quality 10*, we introduced the role of the Agency's liaison officer for institutions. Since then, we have met an invited group of representatives from HEIs, and also representatives from SCOP and UUK. Comments from these meetings have helped us refine the role and develop briefing papers for HEIs and Agency staff.

The draft briefing paper is currently on our web site at www.qaa.ac.uk/public/liaison/CL15_02.htm and we welcome comments. We have also written to the head of each subscribing institution to provide a brief update. Please send comments to f.crozier@qaa.ac.uk by Monday 18 November 2002.

Fiona Crozier

Benchmarking the foundation degree

A significant number of institutions have taken up the new foundation degree. To help with its successful introduction and development, the DfES and HEFCE invited us to produce a qualification benchmark for the new award.

The main aims of the *Foundation degree qualification benchmark* are to:

- facilitate broad consistency of outcomes across the diverse range of foundation degree programmes;
- identify and promote the distinctive features of the foundation degree.

The *qualification benchmark* will help those involved in the design, approval and monitoring of foundation degree programmes. It describes the foundation degree in terms of its particular purpose, general characteristics and generic outcomes. It does not cover subject-level detail or a definition of general expectations about threshold standards.

When developing the *qualification benchmark*, we drew upon our experience of working with the higher education sector to produce qualification descriptors and *Subject benchmark statements*. A working group of expert practitioners from higher and further education was convened to help draft the document, provide insight into the foundation degree, and give critical commentary on the draft statement.

The working group started by asking the fundamental question, 'What is a foundation degree?'

To answer it the group engaged with a number of issues including:

- the relationship between work-based and academic learning;
- the role of employers in the development of foundation degree programmes;
- accommodating the diversity of foundation degree programmes; and
- progression and articulation.

The *qualification benchmark* is organised around the defining characteristics of the foundation degree: accessibility, articulation and progression; employer involvement; flexibility; and partnership. It also provides guidance on knowledge, understanding and skills as well as teaching, learning and assessment.

We have consulted widely on the development of the *Foundation degree qualification benchmark*. This included a one-day event in London to which employers, national training organisation (NTO) representatives, HEIs and FECs were invited. The draft document was also circulated to a range of HEIs, FECs and employers for comment.

In 2002-03, we will be reviewing foundation degrees. During this period, the *qualification benchmark* will remain in final draft form because:

- institutions may not have had enough time to consider fully the contents of the document prior to their review;

- the final draft status of the document reflects the developmental purpose of the review process; and
- the outcomes of the review will help to shape the final version of the benchmark by identifying existing good practice and any gaps in the document.

The draft qualification benchmark can be found at www.qaa.ac.uk/public/foundation/contents.htm
Please forward any comments on the draft to j.ellis@qaa.ac.uk.

Julian Ellis

Benchmarking academic standards

Over the last four years, we have facilitated the production and publication of some 60 *Subject benchmark statements*. These have been based around the 'subject' categories drawn from subject review, and used for other planning purposes. We recognise, however, that there are many quite distinct discipline areas that do not fit easily into, and many well-defined disciplines conflated within, these categories. This, in addition to strong representations made to us by various subject communities, has led the Agency's Board to consider what basis exists for taking benchmarking forward beyond the completed and published *statements*.

The Board is supportive in principle of a 'recognition' scheme and has commissioned further work. The 'recognition' scheme would have three elements:

- **A procedure for agreeing which 'subject/disciplines' can be put forward for benchmarking.**
The Board would like an Advisory Group established to formulate criteria against which such decisions might be taken. We are considering how the group might be constituted. A number of options will be placed before the November meeting of the Board.

- **An agreed method and process for drafting benchmark statements.**

It is unlikely that the Agency will be able to give to subject communities in the future the level of support it has provided in the past. Instead, we would provide 'arms length' support, allowing subject communities to work under their own auspices, but to agreed criteria in terms of group membership and drafting conventions.

- **An 'accreditation' process.**

To accredit a draft statement as suitable for publication, subject communities would need to demonstrate adherence to the conventions and processes of the previous benchmarking, and produce a final draft against agreed, indicative headings.

In January 2003, following agreement of the Board in November, a more detailed operational model will be posted on our web site. For further information please email m.laugharne@qaa.ac.uk or telephone 01452 557139.

Mike Laugharne

2002 overseas audit: Malaysia

Introduction and overview

In 2002, the Agency visited Malaysia as part of its continuing programme of overseas audits. The audit of five partnership links in Malaysia was the third visit to Malaysia in a series that began with the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) in 1995-96. In 1999, to accompany individual audit reports of partnerships in Malaysia, we issued an overview report¹ that is still relevant to UK HEIs working in Malaysia. This article updates the findings and broad themes highlighted in the 1999 report, and might help institutions working in an increasingly competitive field.

Meetings were held with staff and students at each of the UK HEI partner institutions, and with staff of the British Council. In Malaysia the team met senior colleagues from the *Jabatan Pendidikan Swasta (JPS)*, the section of the Malaysian Ministry of Education

which deals with the registration of private higher education institutions (PHEIs), and the *Lembaga Akreditasi Negara (LAN)*, which monitors the quality of their provision.

The regulation of PHEIs in Malaysia is a rapidly developing field. The British Council's Global Education and Training Information Service (GETIS) has stated that JPS, advised by LAN has recently moved to close a number of PHEIs for operating without Ministerial approval, or for infringements of the strict regulations governing promotional materials. The audit team found that the level of knowledge of the Malaysian regulatory environment varied among the UK institutions, and took steps to secure an up-to-date briefing on the current situation from LAN colleagues².

4
higher quality

The observations below have been drawn from the experience and reports of the 2002 audit. They are likely to be relevant to the operation of partnership links in other locations and cover:

- the precepts of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (the Code of practice)*;
- use of earlier overseas audit reports;
- student appeals on assessment and classification;
- the robustness of quality management arrangements for partnership links; and
- the developmental aspects of partnership arrangements.

Challenges and opportunities in Malaysia

The 1999 overview report noted the scale and dynamism of higher education services in Malaysia, and this continues to be a feature of the Malaysian economy. At the time of the 2002 audit, the Malaysian Government was taking steps to enhance the English-language proficiency of Malaysian school students by requiring mathematics and the sciences to be taught in English. The Government believed that higher standards of English proficiency would improve the prospects of Malaysian students.

Key findings of the audit team were:

- English language proficiency had already been identified for action in reports by partner institutions, external examiners and/or link tutors. Many UK institutions and their partners were screening applicants for their English proficiency and providing additional/remedial tuition.
- Students found studying in English challenging, but thought that the acquisition of an award that demonstrated English-language proficiency was important.
- Students registered with a particular UK HEI mainly because of the perceptions of their parents and other advisers with a financial or other interest in their studies. The latter tended to be more interested in an award from a UK institution than from a particular HEI.

Access to the 'UK HE' brand confers a strong advantage on any graduate seeking work in the commercial or industrial sectors, and on any UK HEI entering the Malaysian market through partnership, or by opening a branch campus. The UK HE brand could, however, be compromised if any UK HEI failed to safeguard the academic standards of its awards, or the quality of provision for which it was responsible.

Articulation arrangements for entry to UK degree programmes from PHEI programmes

Malaysian students frequently enter the final year of a UK degree programme, offered by a PHEI, after a two or three-year precursor programme offered by

the same (or another) Malaysian institution. The Malaysian regulators have some reservations about the robustness of such arrangement. UK institutions need to ensure that output standards of the PHEIs' provision are matched to the entry requirements of the UK programme. This is particularly important if students are to progress successfully through what is typically a two-semester programme. In some instances more could have been done to ensure and confirm the appropriateness of the PHEIs' programmes as a preparation for the demands of a UK final-year honours programme, delivered in English.

The impact of the *Code of practice*

By 2002, six of the ten sections of the *Code of practice* had come into effect. As part of its discussions with each of the UK HEIs, the audit team asked how they had responded to the introduction of the *Code of practice*, as precepts of all the relevant sections apply to collaborative provision.

In some institutions, once the *Code of practice* was issued, there was careful analysis of procedures, regulations, and operational responsibilities, and necessary changes were implemented. There was clear evidence, at all levels, of a drive to align institutional arrangements with the *Code of practice* and, in the case of collaborative provision, to enhance quality and academic standards arrangements in overseas partnership links. In these cases it was relatively straightforward to establish confidence in the institution's overall approach to managing the quality of provision, and to safeguarding the academic standards of awards achieved through its partnership links.

In other institutions, it appeared that institutional conformity with the *Code of practice* had been asserted by senior officers, or by committees with overall responsibility for the quality of provision and academic standards of awards, prior to any detailed comparison of the precepts with the institution's procedures and regulations. In such instances the team found it more difficult to establish confidence in the institution's quality management and academic standards arrangements for links, without considerable additional evidence.

Quality management - learning from overseas audit

Since 1996, HEQC and the Agency have published more than 80 reports on overseas partnerships, a *Scoping report* for a visit to Hong Kong and China, and the 1999 *Overview report* for Malaysia. Since there had been two audit visits to Malaysia before 2002, the team wanted to know how useful these reports had been to institutions currently working in the region.

For one institution that participated in the 1999 audits, the report on its partnership had prompted reflection and action. The team found, however, that in several institutions staff supporting partnerships in

Malaysia were unaware that reports of previous audits were available on the Agency's web site. Given the continuing relevance of the 1999 Malaysia overview report for UK HEIs operating there, the team found this surprising and disappointing. Also, staff with responsibilities at operational levels in such institutions seemed unaware of the regular news updates available through the British Council's information services, even when their institution was a subscriber.

Overseas collaborative provision is a challenging activity. To support this work and provide a ready source of enhancement information, we are compiling a report on overseas partnership audits in our *Learning from...* series to be published in spring 2003.

Multiple partnerships

As PHEIs (in Malaysia and elsewhere) build up their portfolios of provision, it is not unusual for them to establish partnerships with overseas institutions in several countries - typically the UK, Australasia and the USA. The audit team found that Malaysian institutions were generally managing the demands of these multiple relationships well. In several cases, however, the interests of students in the PHEIs (and of the PHEIs themselves) might be better served by some coordination between the overseas partners when considering matters such as staff development, enhancements to teaching and learning, learning resources, and quality assurance.

Students' rights - access to appeal and complaints arrangements

In several of the links audited in 2002, the team found that formal agreements between a UK institution and a partner in Malaysia effectively barred students from access to the complaints and appeals arrangements of the awarding body. The team was told that the arrangement was consistent with a strict construction³ of Section 2 of the *Code of practice on Collaborative provision*. After advice from the Agency, the team decided that awarding bodies could not set aside their responsibilities to students registered with them, and advised institutions to revisit their formal agreements. Forthcoming revisions to Section 2 will emphasise the responsibilities of the awarding body to registered students, wherever they are studying.

Robustness in quality management

Previous overseas audit reports have shown that it is inadvisable to allow links to be maintained by just one or two committed individuals in the overseas partner or the UK institution. There is the risk of an individual falling ill, or of them leaving the institution, taking with them their specialist knowledge. Circumstances in which there may be conflicts of interest have been encountered less frequently but do need to be guarded against.

As this weakness in links had been identified in previous overseas audit reports, the 2002 Malaysia audit team was surprised to encounter it still. Also, it was disappointing to find that some institutions actively supporting the development of overseas links were not in a position to check, independently of those most directly involved, that all was well. As occasional failures in the management of overseas links have been reported in the UK press and overseas, and cost institutions both financially and in terms of reputation, the team found this oversight surprising and recommended changes to institutional arrangements.

There was some good practice in the management of overseas partnership links which is worth sharing, including:

- a fully elaborated regulatory and developmental framework, 'supported validation', as an alternative to the more frequently encountered franchising;
- the development of a formal analytical tool to assess and manage the risks associated with overseas partnership links; and
- a resident tutor post in the partner institution, which enhanced teaching and learning and quality management.

This last point introduces one of the most intriguing findings of the 2002 Malaysia reports. Where there was clear evidence that the UK institution had assisted its Malaysian partner to enhance its teaching and learning, and quality management, this coincided with clear evidence of secure academic standards. The corollary was also true. Where there was scant attention to enhancement, the quality of provision and the security of the academic standards of the award was harder to demonstrate. This link between a commitment to development/enhancement and the security of awards in partnership links will be one of the themes explored in *Learning from overseas audit*.

For further information please email
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¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/revreps/oseas/overview/context.htm

² email d.cairns@qaa.ac.uk

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/public/COP/cprovis/Pre1-7.htm

David Cairns

Access to Higher Education

Developments

The QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to Higher Education makes a major contribution to widening the participation of mature students in higher education. It provides a regulatory framework for the validation of Access courses and the certification of successful students. Since the introduction of a recognition scheme in 1987, Access courses have provided an alternative route into higher education for those over the age of 21. The DfES wishes to expand and extend the scope of the QAA Recognition Scheme, in particular to allow 19 and 20 year olds to be admitted to Access courses, and has asked us to explore ways in which this can be achieved without compromising standards. We have undertaken a consultation on this matter with partner organisations and the membership of the 26 authorised validating agencies (AVAs) that validate Access courses. Guidelines for the admission of younger students to Access courses will now be developed, which will preserve the many strengths of the scheme, while making these courses available to a wider constituency. The new guidelines should be available by the beginning of 2003.

Reviewing and licensing

Since January 2002, we have amended our review and licensing processes to take account of the introduction of explicit licensing criteria that all AVAs

must meet. The licensing criteria are grouped under seven principles, covering: AVA membership; governance; legal status; organisational structure and operations; course validation; external and internal moderation; and the award and issue of Access certificates. Twenty of the 26 AVAs have been licensed or relicensed following review and resulting conditions, and we expect to complete this review cycle before the end of 2003.

Statistics about Access students and programmes
We have continued to develop and publish data about Access to Higher Education courses and students. In May 2002, after working with colleagues from other national agencies, we were able to publish an overview document presenting the results of our work. We were pleased to note that, in spite of a recent decline in the number of Access students progressing to higher education, the evidence showed a slight increase in the number of students on Access courses. There were 38,684 students registering on QAA-recognised courses in 2000-01, compared with 37,726 the previous year. The leaflet, *Key Statistics 2002*, is available from us free of charge, or may be viewed on our web site at: www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/access/statsintro.htm

Kath Dentith

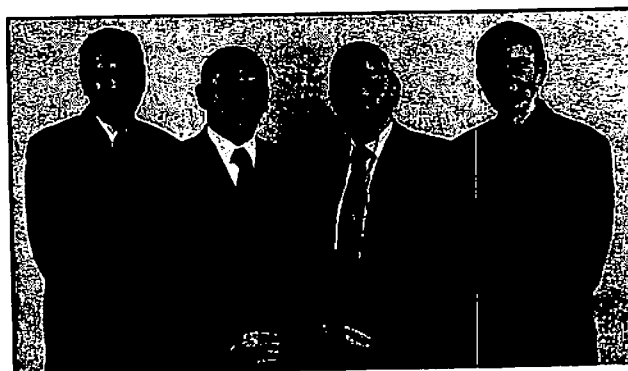
New management team

The Agency now has a new, senior management team, following the appointment of three new Directors.

Douglas Blackstock has joined us from the University of Warwick where he was General Manager of the Students' Union. He is our new Director of Administration and Company Secretary.

Professor Nick Harris has moved (no more than 10 feet in space) from Assistant Director in what used to be the Development Directorate to become Director of Development and Enhancement. Nick remains a Visiting Professor of Teaching and Research at the University of Durham.

And, most recently, Dr Stephen Jackson has become our new Director of Reviews. Stephen spent over 20 years working in Liverpool, finishing as Director, Partnerships and Widening Participation at Liverpool John Moores University.



Stephen Jackson, Douglas Blackstock, Peter Williams and Nick Harris

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