



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

QUALITY ASSURANCE HANDBOOK

OCTOBER 2008

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Introduction

(a) The national context

1. The guidance in this handbook sets in the Oxford context the quality assurance framework for UK higher education. Central to this is the work of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). This was established in 1997 as an independent body funded by subscriptions from UK universities and colleges of higher education, and through contracts with the main UK higher education funding bodies. It describes its mission as to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. The QAA works with higher education institutions to define academic standards and quality, and they carry out and publish reviews against those standards.
2. The QAA's principal concerns in relation to its review of universities is that:
 - (i) an institution has sound internal quality assurance systems and procedures for the assurance of quality and standards; and
 - (ii) procedures are applied effectively at subject level to ensure the quality of individual programmes; (and that both at institutional and subject level there are)
 - (iii) effective and regular means of reviewing the quality of programmes and the standards of awards and implementing any required changes, developments and enhancements;
 - (iv) accurate, complete and reliable information about the quality of the University's programmes and the standards of its awards.
3. In examining the effectiveness of institutions' own quality assurance structures and mechanisms, the QAA indicates that it will particularly take account of:
 - (a) internal quality assurance reviews and their outcomes, especially at the level of the discipline and/or programme;
 - (b) the use made of external reference points (also referred to as the 'Academic Infrastructure'), including the *QAA Code of Practice*, its *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications*, and the published *Subject Benchmarks*;
 - (c) publicly available information about the quality of programmes and the standard of awards;
 - (d) internal systems for the management of information and their contribution to the effective oversight of quality and standards;
 - (e) the development, use and publication of programme specifications;
 - (f) the academic standards expected of and achieved by students;
 - (g) the experience of students as learners, and the enhancement of their learning opportunities¹;
 - (h) the quality assurance of teaching staff, including appointment criteria and the ways in which teaching effectiveness is appraised, improved and rewarded.

¹ QAA defines 'learning opportunities' as the combined effect of the programmes of study and the academic and personal support provided for students.

(b) The University's approach

1. Within the University responsibility for the University's quality assurance framework rests with Council's Education Committee in concert with the divisions and with colleges. The two overriding responsibilities shared with faculties and departments are for the quality of teaching provided within the collegiate University and the standards of the degrees awarded by the University.
2. This handbook focuses on twelve major areas of quality assurance or quality enhancement that the Education Committee and the divisions (drawing on national guidance and expectations) see as being of major importance to any faculty/department in maintaining appropriate oversight of their existing arrangements.
3. In this print (pdf) version, on the left hand page of each section, we set out, in summary form, the guidance provided by QAA, and other national bodies in relation to the particular area; on the right hand page we indicate the location and major elements of the relevant University requirements. The references to sections of the QAA Code of Practice and to existing Education Committee statements of policy and guidance are intended to help faculties/departments understand the importance attached to particular areas, and how existing internal documentation relates to the wider quality assurance expectations. The handbook has been fully revised in the light of QAA's revision to the sections of its Code. N.B. at the time of publication of this handbook the process of revision by the QAA is not yet complete in relation to section 3 'Students with Disabilities'.
4. The Education Committee and the divisions believe that attention to these areas will be of direct assistance to each faculty/department in its own internal quality assurance procedures, and for the Education Committee/divisional reviews or in preparing for any other external accreditation visits. As indicated (para 6 below), the revised handbook should also be of particular help in the completion of the annual Quality Assurance Template.
5. In reviewing faculty/department quality assurance arrangements, attention is drawn to the critical importance of ensuring that:
 - (a) standard quality assurance procedures are time-tabled across the year, with prompts to ensure that necessary actions have been taken at the appropriate time, see the relevant Divisional Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement Calendar, or the standard template published on the EdC website <http://www.admin/epsc/qaqindex.shtml>
 - (b) there are appropriate records of quality assurance discussions/decisions at the appropriate levels. These need not be extensive but should be able to demonstrate clear and regular oversight by the responsible body.
 - (c) there is consistency between the various sources of information provided for students, in particular between the *Examination Regulations*, handbooks, programme specifications, and websites.
 - (d) the appropriate flow of information takes place between departments/faculties and divisions, between divisions and the Education Committee, and, of course, between all three and colleges and college representative bodies.
6. The headings used in the handbook deliberately relate to the sections of the annual QA Templates. Careful review of the replies to the 2007-8 exercise, alongside feedback from the associated meetings with divisional and Education Committee officers, should enable faculties/departments to check that they are meeting the current quality assurance requirements set out in this handbook. Each faculty/department should be in a position to confirm that appropriate policies and procedures are in place in each of the twelve areas and be able to provide confirmation through the annual QA template procedures.

External References

The principal external publications referred in the text are available as follows

a) QAA Code of Practice for the Assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education

<http://gaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/default.asp>

b) Quality Assurance Framework/Teaching Quality Information (HEFCE)

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2006/06_45/

and

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_35/

c) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (QAA)

<http://gaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/default.asp>

d) Subject Benchmarks:

<http://gaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp>

e) European standards and guidelines

http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050221_ENQA_report.pdf

Internal References

The principal University publications referred to in the subsequent sections are available as follows:

a) Quality Assurance Handbook

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/handbook/index.shtml>

b) Policy and Guidance documents are at:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance>

Collaborative Provision of Education, including placements and exchanges

Examinations and Assessment

Flexible and Distributed Learning, including e-Learning and Distance Learning

Graduate Taught Courses

Introduction of New Courses

Research Degrees

Undergraduate Learning and Teaching

i) Divisional Codes of Practice on Supervision

- Humanities: http://www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/graduate_study/research_degrees
- MPLS: <http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/intranet/teachingandlearning/graduateprog.html>
- Social Sciences: <http://www.socsci.ox.ac.uk/>
- Medical Sciences: <http://www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/portal/notices/news/2007/code-of-practice-for-supervisors/>
- Continuing Education: <http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/studentsupport/graduatestudies.php>

The results of annual institutional-level surveys of students can be found at: <http://ceg.oucs.ox.ac.uk/> or through the Education Policy Support website:

The University's policy on the Bologna process:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/bologna.shtml>

1. Admissions

For admissions, see the twelve precepts of Section 10 of the QAA Code of Practice: 'Recruitment and Admissions - September 2006' :

1. Institutions have policies and procedures for the recruitment and admission of students to higher education that are fair, clear and explicit and are implemented consistently.
2. Institutions' decisions regarding admissions to higher education are made by those equipped to make the required judgements and competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.
3. Institutions' promotional materials and activities are accurate, relevant, current, accessible and provide information that will enable applicants to make informed decisions about their options.
4. Institutions' selection policies and procedures are clear and are followed fairly, courteously, consistently and expeditiously. Transparent entry requirements, both academic and non-academic, are used to underpin judgements made during the selection process for entry.
5. Institutions conduct their admissions processes efficiently, effectively and courteously according to fully documented operational procedures that are readily accessible to all those involved in the admissions process, both within and without the institution, applicants and their advisers.
6. Institutions inform applicants of the obligations placed on prospective students at the time the offer of a place is made.
7. Institutions inform prospective students, at the earliest opportunity, of any significant changes to a programme made between the time the offer of a place is made and registration is completed, and that they are advised of the options available in the circumstances.
8. Institutions explain to applicants who have accepted a place arrangements for the enrolment, registration, induction and orientation of new students and ensure that these arrangements promote efficient and effective integration of entrants fully as students.
9. Institutions consider the most effective and efficient arrangements for providing feedback to applicants who have not been offered a place.
10. Institutions have policies and procedures in place for responding to applicants' complaints about the operation of their admissions process and ensure that all staff involved with admissions are familiar with the policies and procedures.
11. Institutions have policies in place for responding to applicants' appeals against the outcome of a selection decision that make clear to all staff and applicants whether, and if so, on what grounds, any such appeals may be considered.
12. Institutions regularly review their policies and procedures related to student admissions to higher education to ensure that they continue to support the mission and strategic objectives of the institution, and that they remain current and valid in the light of changing circumstances.

For students with disabilities, the relevant precepts from Section 3 of the Code of Practice – 'Students with disabilities – October 1999' [currently under revision] are:

4. The institution's publicity, programme details and general information should be accessible to people with disabilities and describe the opportunities for disabled students to participate.
5. In selecting students institutions should ensure equitable consideration of all applicants.
6. Disabled applicants' support needs should be identified and assessed in an effective and timely way, taking into account the applicant's views.

For Postgraduate Research Students, the relevant precepts from Section 1 of the Code of Practice – Postgraduate Research Programmes – September 2004' are:

6. Admissions procedures should be clear, consistently applied and will demonstrate equality of opportunity.
7. Only appropriately qualified and/or prepared students will be admitted to research programmes.
8. Admissions decisions will involve at least two members of the institution's staff who will have received instruction, advice and guidance in respect of selection and admissions procedures. The decision-making process will enable the institution to assure itself that balanced and independent admissions decisions have been made, that support its admissions policy.

1. Admissions

1.1 Procedures for undergraduate and graduate admissions have been subject to wide consultation and review across the University, and are likely to remain high on the agenda for policy development for the foreseeable future. The principal expectations for the management and operation of admissions are set out below.

Undergraduate

1.2 The Common Framework was developed following extensive discussion across the collegiate university in light of the report of the Working Party on Selection and Admissions entitled "Undergraduate Admissions: Policy and Procedures" (November 2005). The Common Framework is published on the Undergraduate Admissions website: http://www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/news/common_framework.shtml It was implemented for the first time during the 2007/08 admissions round. A full version of the framework is annexed at A.

1.3 To show that they are working within the Common Framework, faculties/departments are required to report annually to the Admissions Executive (reporting to the Education Committee) on the procedures in place for their subjects. Faculties/departments will be expected to provide data on how their procedures are working in practice: for example, the extent of redistribution of candidates between colleges. Each year the Education Committee must "sign off" each subject or Joint School; and where the Education Committee feels unable to do so, it will indicate in which areas further action is needed. Divisions must identify clearly the person or persons in their faculties/departments who are responsible for admissions for their subjects, and keep an up-to-date record. Faculties/departments are also required to agree any significant changes in procedures which they wish to introduce with the Admissions Executive.

1.4 Colleges provide an annual "certificate of assurance" that they are operating their admissions systems fairly and efficiently, and are also expected to state that they are in compliance with the Common Framework as it affects them. The first review of the implementation of the Common Framework took place in Hilary Term 2008 and was reported to the Education Committee during Trinity Term 2008.

1.5 Other important documents for Undergraduate Admissions include the Code of Practice for Admissions and Undergraduate Admissions Complaints Procedure via: http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate_courses/finding_out_more/code_of_practice.html

Graduate

1.6 As part of a continuing process of review and refinement, the Education Committee has monitored the operation of the Graduate Admissions processes and practice, following the development of a revised process, implemented in 2004/05.

1.7 Details of the latest developments to the arrangements for graduate admissions are at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/studentssystem/oxonly/gradadm/correspond/index.shtml>

1.8 In operating these procedures, faculties and departments are required to observe the various policy requirements relating to admissions set out in the Education Committee's Policy and Guidance for Taught Graduate Courses and for Research Degrees. These are annexed at B.

2. Induction

Precept 8 - Code of Practice Section 10: 'Recruitment and Admissions' - applies

Institutions explain to applicants who have accepted a place arrangements for the enrolment, registration, induction and orientation of new students and ensure that these arrangements promote efficient and effective integration of entrants fully as students.

Attention is specifically drawn to the diverse needs of students including:

- those with disabilities;
- those whose first language is not English;
- students who have been away from study for a period;
- students needing particular learning support.

For students with disabilities, the relevant precepts from Section 3 of the Code of Practice – 'Students with disabilities' – are:

Enrolment, registration, and induction of students

Precept 7: The arrangements for enrolment, registration and induction of new entrants should accommodate the needs of disabled students.

For postgraduate research students, the relevant precepts of Section 1 of the Code of Practice – 'Postgraduate Research Programmes' – are:

Enrolment and registration of research students

Precept 9: The entitlements and responsibilities of a research student undertaking a postgraduate research programme will be defined and communicated clearly.

Student information and induction

Precept 10: Institutions will provide research students with sufficient information to enable them to begin their studies with an understanding of the academic and social environment in which they will be working.

2. Induction

2.1 There is general agreement about the importance of effective and well-targeted arrangements for induction in faculties/departments, which complement those in place in colleges. The guidance provided by the University is set out in the relevant statements of policy and guidance at

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance>

- Undergraduate Learning and Teaching – section 2 Induction; Study Skills
- Graduate Taught Courses – section 3 Induction and early stages of the course
- Research Degrees – section 3 Induction and early stages of research
- Academic good practice and the avoidance of plagiarism
<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/plagiarism/index.shtml>

In addition some key principles include

2.2 Faculties/departments should have induction arrangements in place well in advance of the beginning of the academic year with a clear sense of the main aims and objectives of the induction process. The current agreement with colleges allocates Monday and Tuesday of Week 0 and Thursday afternoon between 1 and 6 for faculty/departmental induction of graduate students and the remainder of the time during this week to college induction for graduate students. Faculties/departments should be aware of the relationship between their own induction and that provided by colleges.

2.3 International graduate (and undergraduate) students are likely to have a wide range of induction needs. Faculties and departments should ensure that all students are made fully aware of the induction available within the University, including the International Student Advisory Service's Orientation programmes (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/io/orientat.shtml>), pre-sessional courses, and the facilities offered by the Language Centre (especially the courses in English for Academic Purposes (<http://www.lang.ox.ac.uk/eas/>)) and by OUCS.

2.4 Provision made by a faculty/department to identify and to meet any *special educational needs* of students (i) at application and admission stage; (ii) for induction purposes; (iii) on an ongoing basis, should be included in information made available both to applicants, to incoming and to existing students. These special educational needs may relate to specific disabilities for which anticipation and planning are likely to be critical (i.e. the need for special facilities etc). Faculties/departments will need to be able to demonstrate that they are able both to respond appropriately to the particular needs of individual students and to plan ahead to make their provision as accessible as possible.

2.5 Faculties/departments should make all new students aware of sources of support for learning development within the faculty/department and the University, in addition to those offered by colleges. Specific attention should be drawn to the University guidance on academic good practice (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/plagiarism/acadgdprac.shtml>) and the avoidance of plagiarism (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/plagiarism/index.shtml>).

3. Course design, approval, monitoring and review

Course design will need to reflect the expectations of the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* (the descriptors for an Honours Degree and for Master's level qualification are annexed at E), and to show the thought given to the applicable Subject Benchmarks as well as to be in keeping with relevant provisions of the Code of Practice.

Attention is particularly drawn to the precepts in ***Section 7 of the QAA Code of Practice on 'Programme approval, monitoring, and review – September 2006'***, especially:

1 Institutions ensure that their responsibilities for standards and quality are discharged effectively through their procedures for: the design of programmes; the approval of programmes; the monitoring and review of programmes.

2 Institutions ensure that the overriding responsibility of the academic authority (e.g. senate or academic board) to set, maintain and assure standards is respected and that any delegation of power by the academic authority to approve or review programmes is properly defined and exercised.

3 Institutions make use of external participation at key stages for the approval and review of programmes, as independence and objectivity are essential to provide confidence that the standards and quality of the programmes are appropriate.
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4 Approval, monitoring and review processes be clearly described and communicated to those who are involved in them.
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5 Institutions publish, or make available, the principles to be considered when programmes are designed and developed, the fulfilment of which will be tested at the approval stage.
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6 Institutions ensure that programme approval decisions are informed by full consideration of academic standards and of the appropriateness of the learning opportunities which will be offered to students, and that the final decision to approve a programme is taken by the academic authority, or a body acting on its behalf that is independent of the academic department, or other unit that offers the programme, and has access to any necessary specialist advice. There is a confirmation process, which demonstrates that a programme has fulfilled any conditions set out during the approval process and that due consideration has been given to any recommendations.
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3. Course design, approval, monitoring and review

3.1 University policies on Course Design, Approval, Monitoring and Review are to be found in documents relating to the three areas: (i) course design and approval, (ii) monitoring, and (iii) review.

(i) *Course design and approval*

- Policy and Guidance for the Introduction of New Courses and Major Changes to Existing Courses (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance>). This includes:

1. The regulatory framework
2. Timetable for changes to examination regulations
3. Justification for new courses
4. Matters to be covered in proposals for substantial changes
5. Vested interests and the date of effect of changes in regulations
6. Action to be taken after approval of a new course or a major change

3.2 In particular it indicates the necessity for:

(1) The approval of a proposed new course (or major change to a course) by the relevant divisional/Continuing Education Board and by the Education Committee;

(2) The requirement that a new course proposal take account of (a) the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications*, (b) developing knowledge in the discipline (see Precept 7, overleaf), and (c) suitable reflection on any applicable subject benchmark statements (see <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp>)

(3) The extensive range of information to be provided in relation to the proposed new course including:

Academic grounds for new course	External reference points
Anticipated demand	Programme Specification
Academic content	Assessment methods
Numbers	Availability of teaching resources
Availability of examining resources	Library implications
Language teaching implications	IT skills
Examination arrangements	Administration and servicing
Facilities	Research Training

(4) The need for a commentary on the proposal from an independent external expert;

(5) The additional information required in relation to a new joint course, i.e.

- the appropriate expectations of candidates for the new joint course at admissions;
- the co-ordination of tutorial arrangements and mechanisms for co-ordinated oversight;
- the course organising structures and shared responsibilities between parent bodies ;
- any bridges between component subjects;
- the compatibility of examination conventions (especially where two divisions are involved).

3.3 Faculties/departments are reminded that a new course does not come into effect until the relevant course regulations have been approved (as in (1) above) and in addition have been published in the University *Gazette*.

Course design, approval, monitoring and review (continued)

Programme Monitoring and Review

7. Institutions routinely monitor (in an agreed cycle) the effectiveness of their programmes:
 - to ensure that programmes remain current and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and practice in its application;
 - to evaluate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes are being attained by students;
 - to evaluate the continuing effectiveness of the curriculum and of assessment in relation to the intended learning outcomes;
 - to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to remedy any identified shortcomings.
8. Institutions periodically undertake a broader review of the continuing validity and relevance of programmes offered.

Programme withdrawal

9. In the event of a decision to discontinue a programme, measures are taken to notify and protect the interests of students registered for, or accepted for admission to, the programme.

Evaluation of processes

10. Institutions have a means of assessing the effectiveness of their programme design, approval, monitoring and review practices.'

For students with disabilities, the relevant precepts from Section 3 of the Code of Practice 'Students with disabilities' - are: Learning and teaching, including provision for research and other postgraduate students

8. 'Programme specifications should include no unnecessary barriers to access by disabled people.'
9. 'Academic support services and guidance should be accessible and appropriate to the needs of disabled students.'
10. 'The delivery of programmes should take into account the needs of disabled people or, where appropriate, be adapted to accommodate their individual requirements.'
11. 'Institutions should ensure that, wherever possible, disabled students have access to academic and vocational placements including field trips and study abroad.'
12. 'Disabled research students should receive the support and guidance necessary to secure equal access to research programmes.'

(ii) Monitoring

3.4 For the monitoring of existing courses, faculties/departments should note the requirements set out in the annual QA Template and in the Education Committee Policy and Guidance on Examinations and Assessment.

3.5 Particular importance is attached to the specification of relevant **responsibilities**:

- where responsibility rests for considering changes to existing courses;
- who is responsible for drafting proposed changes in regulations;
- where responsibility rests for monitoring existing courses.

3.6 The relevant QAA commentary (precept 7) distinguishes between the regular **monitoring** of courses and periodic **review**.

Programme monitoring (essentially an ongoing faculty/departmental responsibility) focuses on the effectiveness of the programme in achieving its stated aims, the success of students in achieving the intended learning outcomes, the continuing effectiveness of the curriculum and the associated assessment.

In contrast, periodic review (essentially a divisional/Education Committee responsibility on an agreed cycle) is seen as the means for examining the continued validity and relevance of the programmes offered.

3.7 Faculties/departments will need to consider what aspects of their procedures best capture the concept of 'programme monitoring'. Examples provided by QAA include formal consideration of:

- external examiners' reports; any reports from accrediting or other external bodies
- staff and student feedback; feedback from former students and their employers;
- student progress and other relevant data; material available to students such as programme specifications, student handbooks and websites.

3.8 Most of these are established procedures within the University. The annual consideration of examiners' reports is seen as the most likely and natural context in which a minuted review of programmes can take place, and subject areas should arrange for the discussion of examiners' reports to include such an opportunity. This is made explicit in the Policy and Guidance on Examinations and Assessment (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance/examass.pdf>).

7.3. The University regards the reports made on behalf of all the examiners as an important element of its quality assurance arrangements. A template for the content of these reports is annexed at D. Responsible faculty/department academic bodies should use the annual reports by examiners, with their detailed breakdown of the assessment process, to monitor:

- (1) any changes which the examination process might have suggested in relation to existing methods of assessment;
- (2) any changes which the examination process might have suggested in relation to the existing content of the course;
- (3) any need to review specific options;
- (4) the overall standard of performance in the examination, including any trends in results or in relation to particular areas of the curriculum;
- (5) any possible changes in examination conventions, procedures or regulations suggested by the examiners' experience of the examination process.

Extract from the Education Committee protocol for joint Education Committee/Divisional Board reviews of faculties and departments

Introduction

1. Reviews have a central role in the divisional and institutional oversight of the academic and financial activities of departments and faculties. Divisions have the responsibility for management of quality assurance in their departments/faculties and the Education Committee has responsibility to ensure institutional oversight of the process. In June 2006 Council agreed a new procedure for review of faculties/departments by the relevant division and EdC acting jointly. The reviews are to cover all aspects of the work of the faculty/department, and each is to be reviewed every 6 years.
2. This guidance will be reviewed annually to take into account issues anticipated in reviews to be conducted in the year ahead, as well as experience in previous years. It addresses the work involved in undertaking a review under the following headings:
 - (i) The purpose and context of reviews (paras 4-10)
 - (ii) Composition of the review committee (paras 11-18)
 - (iii) Assembling information (paras 19-26)
 - (iv) Briefing the review committee (paras 27-30)
 - (v) The meeting days (paras 31-36)
 - (vi) Preparing and handling the report (paras 40-44)
3. The work of review panels is supported by officers from the relevant division and from the Education Policy Support Section. This note is written primarily to provide them with guidance, although others involved in the process, including those chairing committees, may also find it useful. Additional guidance on specific points can be sought either from divisional or Education Policy Support officers.

3.9 This is not intended to replace the existing arrangements for an annual programme review in a number of programmes, especially PGT courses, but to indicate how a similar process can be linked to the existing extensive review of examiners' reports.

3.10 Faculties and departments are asked to pay particular attention to the oversight they exercise over joint undergraduate courses, especially in relation to effective monitoring, arrangements for organisational oversight, reporting mechanisms and commentaries from external and internal examiners.

3.11 Faculties and departments are reminded that the maintenance of **consistency** between programme specifications, examination regulations, amendments to handbooks and to websites is of the first importance. Faculties and departments should be clear where responsibility lies for the accuracy of information provided on all of these mechanisms.

3.12 Students are naturally interested in any links between tutorial provision and lecture courses. Faculties/departments may have different philosophies in this respect; it is helpful if an explanation for the existing practice is available to, and understood by, both staff and students.

3.13 It is also important to be able to show how classes, seminars, and practicals fit into the overall pattern of teaching provision. In some cases this can be handled directly via the course handbook or a teaching database. Other subject areas have found it helpful to publish teaching guides to help communicate the relative roles of different types of teaching, the density of syllabus coverage required and how different methods can best be used by staff and students alike.

3.14 Such guidance is particularly helpful to new tutors, graduate student teachers, and those teaching on a temporary basis (e.g. to cover sabbatical leave), but can also be of assistance to students, where the format can appropriately be shared. Students may be insecure about the amount (and type) of teaching they need in a particular topic in order to meet the examination requirements, and guidance is greatly valued.

(iii) Review

3.14 The University's agreed approach to **periodic review** is set out in the detailed Protocol which is available at (add). The introduction to the protocol (set out opposite) indicates the normal procedures which the University requires to be followed.

4. Examinations

see Precepts from Section 6 of the QAA Code of Practice 'Assessment of Students – September 2006' (set out in full in Annexe C) especially:

Precept 3: Institutions encourage assessment practice that promotes effective learning.
Precept 4: Institutions publicise and implement effective, clear, and consistent policies for the membership, procedures, powers and accountability of assessment panels and boards of examiners.' A significant addition to the rubric of this precept in the 2006 edition states that 'Making all relevant policies, procedures, processes and regulations readily available to students and staff in appropriate and accessible language is also important.'
Precept 5: Institutions ensure that assessment is conducted with rigour, probity and fairness and with due regard for security.
Precept 6: Institutions ensure that the amount and timing of assessment enables effective and appropriate measurement of students' achievement of intended learning outcomes.
Precept 7: Institutions have transparent and fair mechanisms for marking and for moderating marks.
Precept 8: Institutions publicise and implement clear rules and regulations for progressing from one stage of a programme to another and for qualifying for an award.
Precept 10: Institutions ensure that everyone involved in the assessment of students is competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.
Precept 14: Institutions encourage students to adopt good academic conduct in respect of assessment and seek to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities. <i>[See also University guidelines on plagiarism at : http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/plagiarism/index.shtml]</i>
Precept 15: Institutions ensure that assessment decisions are recorded and documented accurately and systematically and that the decisions of relevant assessment panels and examination boards are communicated as quickly as possible.

4. Examinations

4.1 University policy on examinations is set out in the:

- Examination Regulations

[http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/08-](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/08-00 REGULATIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS.shtml)

[00 REGULATIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS.shtml](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/08-00 REGULATIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS.shtml)

- The Education Committee/Proctors' *Policy and Guidance on Examinations and Assessment*.

Faculties/departments need to be in a position to demonstrate that their processes comply with all the relevant regulations, policy and guidance. The annual Quality Assurance Template identifies specific items for annual monitoring, and the Quality Assurance calendar provides an indicative timetable for action. Those items identified below are key elements in the overall management of assessment processes, and should be monitored closely.

4.2 *Appointment of Examiners*

- (1) The process for nominating examiners, as set out in the Examination Regulations and in relevant Standing Orders.
- (2) The mechanism used to ensure a fair distribution of examining duties.
- (3) The mechanisms used to identify and agree suitable individuals to be nominated as external examiners and the adequacy of information on those nominated.
- (4) The information to be provided for external examiners at the time of their appointment, and ensuring that it is sufficient for the purpose.
- (5) An indication of the role which external examiners are expected to play, in line with the University's expectations as set out in the guidance on examinations from the Proctors and the Education Committee and the QAA Code of Practice (see especially Annexe B, precept 1).

4.3 *Examination conventions²*

- (1) The locus of responsibility for approving examination conventions, and the means of ensuring that these are in keeping with University policy, and approved at the appropriate stage of the year.
- (2) The adequacy of arrangements within the faculty/department to ensure that University policies regarding examinations, e.g. double blind marking, are implemented.
- (3) The arrangements within the faculty/department, to ensure that students are made aware of the examining conventions to be applied to the examination of their course both via handbooks/websites and via examiners' circulars.
- (4) Appropriate guidance to candidates on the nature and quality of the work associated with the award of first, upper second, lower second, and third class degrees; and in the case of examinations which are not classified, the nature and quality of work required for a Pass and a Distinction.

² Typically examination conventions are seen as of three types: paper-setting conventions; marking conventions and classification conventions.

For precepts relating to External Examining – see section 4 of the Code of Practice (set out in full in annexe 4) - and relevant sections of the Education Committee/Proctors Policy and Guidance on Examinations and Assessment.

For students with disabilities, the relevant precepts from Section 3 of the Code of Practice – ‘Students with disabilities’ – are:

Examination, assessment and progression

Precept 13: Assessment and examination policies, practices and procedures should provide disabled students with the same opportunity as their peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes.

Precept 14: Where studying is interrupted as a direct result of a disability-related cause, this should not unjustifiably impede a student’s subsequent academic progress.

For postgraduate research students, the relevant sections of Section 1 of the Code of Practice – ‘Postgraduate Research Programmes’ – are:

Assessment

Precept 22: Institutions will use criteria for assessing research degrees that enable them to define the academic standards of different research programmes and the achievements of their graduates. The criteria used to assess research degrees must be clear and readily available to students, staff and external examiners.

Precept 23: Research degree assessment procedures must be clear; they must be operated rigorously, fairly, and consistently; include input from an external examiner, and carried out to a reasonable timescale.

Precept 24: Institutions will communicate their assessment procedures clearly to all the parties involved, i.e. the students, the supervisor(s) and the examiners.

- (5) The faculty/department should keep under regular review the balance of assessment methods used within the courses for which it is wholly or jointly responsible, and the extent to which these promote effective learning.

4.4 Examiners' reports

- (1) The faculty/department should have clear expectations as to which body (or bodies) is responsible for considering the reports of examiners and of external examiners, the reporting lines and the indicative timetable for their consideration.
- (2) Where anonymised reports are seen and discussed by the JCC, there should be a mechanism ensured for responding to the comments of junior members. Faculties/departments without JCC's should ensure alternative arrangements are in place.
- (3) Clarity about where, within the division/faculty/department, responsibility lies for ensuring that appropriate and timely feedback is provided to external examiners, and action to ensure that the system works effectively.
- (4) Equal clarity as to where, within the faculty/department responsibility lies for ensuring that changes agreed as a result of examiners' reports are implemented. This will normally rest with the relevant teaching committee, reporting to the faculty/divisional board (e.g. where changes in regulations are involved) and to subsequent years' examiners (e.g. to implement refinements to examination conventions). Students' vested interests must of course be respected, and steps taken to inform them of changes.
- (5) It is assumed that in all cases arrangements are in place (via libraries, websites, designated contacts, and/or by other means) to enable students within the faculty/department to have access to anonymised copies of examiners' reports³, and that the students know where they may be consulted.

4.5 Examination of research degrees

- (1) Faculties and departments should take particular care to ensure that the arrangements for approving the recommendations of the examiners of research degrees are robust and transparent, and, in all cases, ensure the independence of the approval process.
- (2) In addition to their arrangements for considering and approving examiners' reports on individual candidates, faculties/departments should have in place mechanisms to identify and report on any general points arising out of the reports.
- (3) Faculties/departments should consider any ways in which it is possible to monitor the overall standards achieved by candidates for research degrees.

³ It is recognised that access to examiners' reports as they stand may not be possible where small groups of candidates have been examined for a course; for groups of 5 or less, or other small groups where individuals might be identified from the comments, access should be given to the examiners' general comments. For further advice, contact the Education Policy Support Section.

5. Student feedback

See Section 5 of the QAA Code of Practice ‘Academic Appeals and Student Complaints on Academic Matters – October 2007’.

Precept 3: Institutions ensure that those studying at all levels have the opportunity to raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage.

See Section 1 of the QAA Code of Practice ‘Postgraduate Research Programmes – September 2004’.

Precept 21: Institutions will put in place mechanisms to collect, review and, where appropriate, respond to feedback from all concerned with postgraduate research programmes. They will make arrangements for feedback to be considered openly and constructively and for the results to be communicated appropriately.

See Section 7 of the QAA Code of Practice ‘Programme Approval, Monitoring and review’.

Precept 7: Institutions should monitor the effectiveness of their programmes ...

- to evaluate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes are being attained by students, and
- to ensure that recommendations for appropriate actions are followed up to remedy any identified shortcomings.

This section of the code goes on to list the potential drivers for monitoring activity as including staff and student feedback, and feedback from former students.

See Section 3 of the QAA Code of Practice ‘Students with disabilities’.

Precept 24: Institutions should operate systems to monitor the effectiveness of provision for students with disabilities, evaluate progress and identify opportunities for enhancement.

Evidence of effective student feedback systems is also essential to the University’s ability to meet the expectations for **Teaching Quality Information (TQI)** in line with HEFCE requirements and the current method of QAA Institutional Audit (see section 7 of this handbook) which calls for all HEIs to equip themselves with information on student satisfaction with their HE experience, including academic guidance, library services and IT, accommodation, equipment and facilities, quality of teaching and learning, assessment arrangements, and pastoral support.

5. Student feedback

5.1 The University regards the availability of effective channels for student feedback as a key element in its monitoring of quality and standards. This priority is reflected at national level and underlines the extent to which institutions are expected both to work to improve feedback rates, and to have in place appropriate mechanisms for student representation. Detailed procedures may vary but must be clear and appropriately publicised. **Faculties/departments should have documentation that refers to the following areas.**

5.2 Joint Consultative Committees

- (1) The existence within the faculty/department of an undergraduate and/or graduate Joint Consultative Committee, the arrangements (and frequency) of meetings, and how items may be put forward for consideration. Particular attention is drawn to the importance of ensuring effective systems of representation for graduate as well as undergraduate students.
- (2) If the subject area does not make use of a formal JCC, then it should set out the alternative arrangements, e.g. representation on committees, meetings with officers of the faculty/department, that are in place to ensure formal channels for student feedback.
- (3) Where there are JCCs, their terms of reference and election proceedings should be publicised and the constitution should always ensure that the student members are in a majority and that there is provision for access to the parent body where a recommendation from a JCC is turned down.
- (4) Mechanisms should be in place to ensure that any conclusions reached by joint committees are taken into account in considering matters relating to learning, teaching, and assessment, and that the outcome (whether positive or negative) is always relayed back to students.

5.3 Feedback questionnaires

- (1) The use made within the department of student feedback questionnaires. These should cover all lecture courses, and, wherever appropriate, other course elements. Divisions and all faculties/departments are also required to consider the outcomes of Oxford's own course experience questionnaires and the national surveys – National Student Survey for undergraduates and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey for research students. These are signposted via the Education Committee website.
- (2) The arrangements made for the analysis of the results of student feedback questionnaires; how and to whom are they reported. Subject areas should also ensure that there are mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate action in response to any significant issues which arise.
- (3) Subject areas should give thought to how they can improve the quantity and quality of feedback. In the case of the University's own course experience questionnaires, low response rates markedly reduce the lessons that can be drawn from the survey.

5.4 Student representation

Following representation by the OUSU representatives on the Education Committee, divisions have recently been consulted about developing the existing arrangements for student representation in divisions, faculties and departments. In the meantime, the Education Committee asks faculties/departments to give particular thought to: (a) the mechanisms and rationale for student representation on faculty/department committees; (b) arrangements to support the work of student representatives.

6. Student complaints and appeals

<p>For complaints and appeals see Section 5 of the QAA Code of Practice ‘Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters – October 2007’, especially:</p>
<p>Precept 1: Institutions have fair, effective and timely procedures for handling students’ complaints and academic appeals.</p>
<p>Precept 2: Institutions’ complaints and appeals procedures are approved and overseen at the highest level.</p>
<p>Precept 3: Institutions ensure that those studying at all levels have the opportunity to raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage.</p>
<p>Precept 4: Institutions make publicly available easily comprehensible information on their complaints and appeals procedures.</p>
<p>Precept 5: Clear design of institutions’ complaints and appeals procedures enables them to be conducted in a timely, fair, and reasonable manner, and having regard to any applicable law.</p>
<p>Precept 6: Institutions ensure that appropriate action is taken following a complaint or an appeal.</p>
<p>Precept 7: Institutions satisfy themselves that appropriate guidance and support is available for persons making a complaint or an appeal, including those taking advantage of learning opportunities provided away from institutions and/or through flexible and distributed learning.</p>
<p>Precept 8: Institutions make provision in their procedures for those making a complaint or an appeal to be accompanied at any stage, including formal hearings.</p>
<p>Precept 9: Institutions have effective arrangements to monitor, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of their complaints and appeals procedures and to reflect on their outcomes for enhancement purposes.</p>
<p>Precept 10 Institutions ensure that suitable briefing and support is provided for all staff and students involved in handling or supporting complaints and appeals.</p>
<p>For students with disabilities, the relevant precepts from Section 3 of the Code of Practice – ‘Students with disabilities’ – are:</p>
<p><i>Complaints</i></p>
<p>Precept 21: Institutions should ensure that information about all complaints and appeals policies and procedures is available in accessible formats and communicated to students.</p>
<p>Precept 22: Institutions should have in place policies and procedures to deal with complaints arising directly or indirectly from a student’s disability.</p>
<p>For postgraduate research students, the relevant sections of Section 1 of the Code of Practice – ‘Postgraduate Research Programmes’ – are:</p>
<p><i>Feedback, complaints and appeals</i></p>
<p>Precept 21: Institutions will put in place mechanisms to collect, review and, where appropriate, respond to feedback from all concerned with postgraduate research programmes. They will make arrangements for feedback to be considered openly and constructively and for the results to be communicated appropriately.</p>
<p>Precept 26: Independent and formal procedures will exist to resolve effectively complaints from research students about the quality of the institution’s learning and support provision.</p>
<p>Precept 27: Institutions will put in place formal procedures to deal with any appeals made by research students. The acceptable grounds for appeals will be clearly defined.</p>

6. Student complaints and appeals

6.1 Internal sources of information on complaints and appeals include:

- The Education Committee's Policy and Guidance on Taught Graduate Courses (Section 8) and on Research Degrees (Section 9) ;

- The Proctors' and Assessor's Memorandum;
<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/pam/index.shtml>

- Relevant sections of the Regulations and Statutes.
[http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/08-18 Part 18 Appeals from Decisions of the Proctors and Examiners.shtml](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/08-18%20Part%2018%20Appeals%20from%20Decisions%20of%20the%20Proctors%20and%20Examiners.shtml)

6.2 The Education Committee has produced a Complaints and Appeals template for inclusion in student handbooks, which may be tailored to local need:
<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance/compappeal.pdf>

6.3 QAA defines a 'complaint' as any specific concern about the provision of a course/module, or a programme of study, or a related academic service. An 'appeal' is a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on student progression, assessment and awards.

6.4 If not included in the standard template, every faculty or department also needs to have a clear, written statement to cover the following:

- (i) How complaints by students and/or their college are handled within the faculty/department and how students are made aware of the procedures to follow.
- (ii) How students within the faculty/department are made aware of their right to take certain complaints direct to the Proctors.
- (iii) How appeals against academic decisions affecting the student's academic progress made by a student and/or their college are handled within the faculty/department.

6.5 Bearing in mind precept 9 (opposite), faculty/departmental procedures should also be in place to cover:

- (i) The form of record to be kept within the faculty/department of the numbers and types of student complaints and academic appeals.
- (ii) The systems for monitoring the number and nature of complaints.
- (iii) The briefing and updating available to staff who may be involved in dealing with complaints and appeals.

6.6 Wherever this is feasible without breaching confidentiality, an anonymised report of issues raised in complaints and appeals should be made to the body responsible for the course. This will permit their outcomes to be used in reviewing existing procedures.

7. Statistical information

The revised Quality Assurance Framework (established by HEFCE following the Cooke report of 2002 – see HEFCE 02/15 and 03/51) has recently been further amended (HEFCE 05/35 and 06/45) to strengthen the place of statistical Teaching Quality Information (TQI) in the overall assessment of the quality of provision.

Since 2005, quantitative data provided by HESA has been published on the TQI website (previously Hero.ac.uk, from November 2007 Unistats.com) together with the results of the National Student Survey. (NSS). Standard good practice suggests that these data should be regularly reviewed for the purposes of setting, developing and monitoring quality and standards.

Quantitative data (provided from HESA by subject area):

- a. Data on students' entry qualifications and tariff points.
- b. Data on students continuing at the institution, completing awards and leaving without awards (separately for students after the first year of study, and for all years of study).
- c. Data on class of first degree achieved by students.
- d. Data on leavers entering employment or further study, or unemployed, and data on the most common job types held by employed leavers.
- e. Results of the National Student Survey.

The above may be considered as minimum datasets for effective monitoring of provision. Data collection relating to a full range of performance indicators is currently in development within the University. Three main sets of data: admissions statistics, FHS results, student numbers, are routinely published in the *Gazette* and can be found at <http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/univstats/>

In line with statutory requirements, information relating to gender, ethnicity, and disability are routinely available and monitored.

As planned improvements to the student record systems are rolled out, the University is working towards the provision of substantial annual data sets (in line with a. to c. (above)) for all its taught programmes.

7. Statistical information

7.1 The availability of statistical information is not an end in itself but is one of the five key monitoring points for quality and standards. At faculty/department level, access to data should allow the faculty/department to:

- Establish the context within which the results for an individual faculty/department should be reviewed;
- Identify any immediate developments about which action should be taken;
- Consider any longer-term trends to which consideration should be given.

7.2 It is in order to achieve this objective, via the availability of annual standard data sets, that the University is working towards enabling a faculty/department to:

- (1) keep track of the names and numbers (and other categorisations – gender, ethnicity, disability etc.- as deemed appropriate for quality monitoring purposes) of undergraduates and graduate students who:
 - (a) transfer into;
 - (b) transfer out of;
 - (c) withdraw from;
 - (d) have temporary suspension from;
 - (e) fail to pass;the courses for which it is wholly or partly responsible;
- (2) review the *annual progress and achievement rates of undergraduates* on the courses for which it is solely or jointly responsible, and in particular with respect to gender, race and disability;
- (3) monitor any *relationship between degree performance* and entry qualifications in the undergraduate courses for which it is solely or jointly responsible;
- (4) monitor the *annual progress and achievement rates of taught graduate students* in the courses for which it is wholly or partly responsible and in particular with respect to gender, race and disability;
- (5) track the *progress and achievement rates of undergraduate and graduate students over time* in the courses for which they are wholly or partly responsible and in particular with respect to gender, race and disability;
- (6) keep records of *students undertaking doctoral research* to allow tracking of:
 - (a) students who have submitted within four years;
 - (b) students who have had their thesis referred;
 - (c) students who have been awarded the D.Phil. after initial reference back;
 - (d) students who have not been awarded the D.Phil. after initial reference back.
- (7) ensure that appropriate access to and training in the use of OSS is available to key staff. Information is available from <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/sr/>
- (8) keep a record of the destinations of the undergraduate and/or graduate students who have completed the courses for which it is wholly or partly responsible, in liaison with the Careers Service as necessary.

7.4 *Chairmen of Examiners* are specifically asked to record statistical information relating to the examination(s) over which they have presided, as part of their report. A template for this purpose is included as an annexe to the Education Committee's *Policy and Guidance on Examinations and Assessment*.

8. External input

Appropriate external input is assumed within the QAA Code of Practice. See for example

Section 1 'Postgraduate Research Programmes – September 2004

Precept 21: Institutions will put in place mechanisms to collect, review and, where appropriate, respond to feedback from all concerned with postgraduate research programmes. They will make arrangements for feedback to be considered openly and constructively and for the results to be communicated appropriately.

Institutions will wish to establish and operate constructive feedback procedures that are as representative as possible of the views of all those involved. These include feedback mechanisms for:

- current students and recently completed research degree graduates;
- supervisors, review panels and internal examiners;
- research administrators;
- external parties, including external examiners, sponsors, collaborating organisations, employers and, where possible, alumni.

Section 7 'Programme design, approval, monitoring and review – September 2006'

Precept 1: (excerpt) Institutions ensure that ...due account is taken of: ...employers and any relevant national legislation/national commitments to European and international processes.

Precept 3: Institutions make use of external participation at key stages for the approval and review of programmes, as independence and objectivity are essential to provide confidence that the standards and quality of the programmes are appropriate.

The accompanying guidance makes plain that QAA expects relevant considerations to include reports from accrediting or other external bodies; professional or statutory body requirements; feedback from employers; and changes in employer expectations and employment opportunities. Whilst the contributions of external examiners may be useful at various stages of approval and review, they are unlikely to be able to demonstrate the impartiality required for membership of a formal approval or review panel.

8. External input

8.1 In reviewing its policy on external input, the Education Committee accepted that many faculties/departments have extensive links with outside bodies, including government, the research councils, other universities and academic networks, wider professional bodies, and employers. It recognised that such links are part of the day-to-day work of members of academic staff, who contribute to a wide range of external networks involving other universities, (e.g. via external examining), learned societies, and funding bodies.

8.2 Following previous University policy, some faculties/departments continue to find it helpful to focus these links through the composition and work of external advisory committees: the first of these bodies were local ventures, but they were found to be a useful means of involving distinguished and experienced externals in the work of the faculty/department, particularly in areas such as undergraduate recruitment, teaching and research strategy, employment questions and relationships with industry. The University welcomes the work of such bodies but it no longer makes them a formal requirement.

8.3 In relation to external input, the following are required:

- (1) The Education Committee requires all new course proposals to be submitted with an informed external view of the content and structure of the proposed new course.
- (2) The Education Committee/Divisional Quality Assurance Template requires faculties/departments to indicate whether they have an external advisory body or whether external input is provided by other means. We will continue to ask this and related questions in order to monitor the different ways in which external input (especially in relation to the courses for which a faculty/department is responsible) feeds into the work of a faculty/department. The quality enhancement section of the templates will provide examples of possible value to other faculties/departments within the University.
- (3) The Education Committee/Divisional faculty/department review process (see pp. 16-17) places particular emphasis on the involvement of external reviewers, and they make a substantial contribution to ensuring that provision is subject to informed scrutiny from outside the University.
- (4) All divisions are now asked to ensure that they receive (and share with the Education Committee) a copy of any accreditation or equivalent reports made on faculties/departments within the division.

9. Quality enhancement in learning and teaching

Quality Enhancement has become the latest element for focus and attention on the part of HEFCE and the QAA. The Handbook for Institutional Audit (para 47) provides a description of quality enhancement. 'In this definition of quality enhancement, the emphasis is on how an institution seizes developmental opportunities in a manner no less systematic and no less based on clear strategic planning than quality assurance - 'taking deliberate steps'. Quality enhancement is therefore seen as an aspect of institutional quality management that is designed to secure, in the context of the constraints within which individual institutions operate, steady, reliable and demonstrable improvements in the quality of learning opportunities.'

In the light of this emphasis, the process of QAA Institutional Audit now centres considerably on the institution's capacity for reflection, review and systematic enhancement of existing practice. As already noted, the precepts of Section 7 ('Programme design, approval, monitoring and review') of the Code of Practice include:

Precept 7: Institutions routinely monitor (in an agreed cycle) the effectiveness of their programmes

- to ensure that programmes remain current and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and practice in its application;
- to evaluate the continuing effectiveness of the curriculum and of assessment in relation to the intended learning outcomes;
- to ensure that appropriate action is taken to remedy any identified shortcomings.

Accompanying QAA guidance (Appendix 3 to Section 7) provides a number of prompts for institutions reflecting on their own practices. These include:

- Is there evidence that curricular content and design is informed by recent developments in techniques of teaching and learning, by current research and scholarship, and by any changes in relevant occupational or professional requirements?
- How effective is teaching in relation to curriculum content and programme aims?
- How effectively do staff draw upon their research, scholarship or professional activity to inform their teaching?
- Does the assessment process enable learners to demonstrate achievement of the intended outcomes?
- How effectively is learning facilitated by academic guidance, feedback and supervisory arrangements?
- How does the institution review and seek to enhance the quality of the student learning experience? Does it have strategies for building upon its quality assurance processes to enhance the quality of its provision?
- Is the quality of teaching maintained and enhanced through effective staff development, peer review of teaching, integration of part-time and visiting staff, effective team teaching and induction and mentoring of new staff?

9. Quality enhancement in learning and teaching

9.1 The Education Committee has formulated a preliminary Quality Enhancement Strategy to reflect the work on enhancement which is already taking place within the collegiate University. The committee's conclusion is that a University Quality Enhancement Strategy should:

- (1) Build quality enhancement on the basis of existing quality assurance arrangements;
- (2) Collect, collate and circulate institution-wide enhancement and development material where appropriate, e.g. outcomes from student feedback; policy and guidance;
- (3) Draw from teaching development and academic leadership programmes to explore and promote developmental and enhancement possibilities;
- (4) Avoid creating an additional layer of bureaucracy related to quality enhancement;
- (5) Take proper account of the significant contribution to the quality enhancement of student experience provided by service units across the collegiate University.

9.2 Sections to promote dissemination/enhancement activity are now included in the annual Quality Assurance Templates. Faculties/departments are asked to indicate for each of the main quality assurance areas where aspects have been enhanced and developed during the course of the previous period. The QA Template is accessed at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/handbook/>

9.3 Further key drivers for quality enhancement are

- (1) the work of divisional committees as natural fora for quality enhancement ;
- (2) the work of the Oxford Learning Institute in support of quality enhancement across the collegiate University (<http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/oli.php?page=288>)
- (3) the work of divisional academic advisers in collaboration with colleagues and within the framework of the CETL (<http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/cetl.php?page=202>).

9.4 In reflecting on some key areas of quality enhancement, divisions, faculties and departments should identify:

- (1) Formal or informal mechanisms available within the division/faculty/department to disseminate good practice in learning and teaching at both taught and research levels;
- (2) Formal or informal opportunities available within the division/faculty/department for reflection on teaching and assessment methods and for the exploration and evaluation of new ideas and developments;
- (3) Mechanisms by which the division/faculty/department might (where appropriate) play a role in disseminating good practice in tutorial or other teaching in relation to the programmes for which they share responsibility;
- (4) Means of incorporating innovations in subject knowledge or practice, in new research, or in current scholarly debate, in the courses for which the faculty/department is wholly or partly responsible.

9.5 The University established its Centre for Excellence in Preparing for Academic Practice through a successful bid to HEFCE, and all divisions/faculties/departments should be able to describe how they work with the CETL.

10. Monitoring of teaching

The QAA Code of Practice attaches high priority to institutions ensuring that those involved in all aspects of the delivery of taught courses and research programmes are both trained and competent.

Relevant precepts, either dealing directly with teaching or dealing with teaching-related activities, include:

Section 1: 'Postgraduate Research Programmes'

Precept 1: Institutions will put in place effective arrangements to maintain appropriate academic standards and enhance the quality of postgraduate research programmes.

Precept 14: Institutions will appoint supervisors who have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor research students effectively.

Precept 21: Institutions will put in place mechanisms to collect, review, and, where appropriate, respond to feedback from all concerned with postgraduate research programmes. They will make arrangements for feedback to be considered openly and constructively and for the results to be communicated appropriately.

Section 3: 'Students with disabilities'

Precept 15: Induction and other relevant training programmes for all staff should include disability awareness/equality and training in specific services and support.

10. Monitoring of teaching

10.1 Quality assurance places particular emphasis on the means by which those responsible for educational provision assure themselves of the appropriate quality of what is provided. This applies to a broad range of a faculty/department's work but attaches particular importance to all aspects of teaching. It is therefore important for a faculty/department to be able to describe the procedures/systems in place relating to the following:

10.2 *Monitoring of teaching*

(1) The range of mechanisms within the faculty/department to monitor the teaching undertaken by established staff -

- (a) during their probationary period;
- (b) after their probationary period.

These are likely to include some or all of the following: mentoring, student feedback (both externally and internally collected), review of students' performance, and peer observation.

(2) Any formal or informal means for peer review of teaching within the faculty or department, either within the first five years or for the longer term;

(3) The formal and informal opportunities (e.g. appraisal/review procedures, mentoring, support from faculty teaching advisers, teaching committees, heads of department, or OLI/CETL) for all those teaching within the faculty/department (established and non-established staff) to discuss their staff development needs in relation to teaching.

(4) Reference to external and internal student feedback questionnaire results in relation to teaching.

10.3 *Teaching by graduate students*

The University's expectations in relation to teaching by graduate students are set out in the Policy and Guidance on Taught Graduate Courses (Section 6.8) and the Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees (Section 11). The University's explicit policy is that no graduate student should be allowed to teach without some form of initial training or induction. The Centre for Excellence in Preparing for Academic Practice is actively involved with all faculties/departments in supporting this policy.

<http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/cetl.php?page=54>

10.4 Faculties/departments should be in a position to identify

(1) How the faculty/department ensures that graduate students are not permitted to undertake teaching on behalf of the faculty/department without having first undergone some form of training. This might take the form of training coupled with the maintenance of a teaching (including tutorial) register.

(2) What information is provided for graduate students who teach on behalf of the faculty/department, e.g. a statement of the duties involved and the support available within the faculty/department. This might be provided via teaching guides, as part of initial training, or via course co-ordinators.

Section 4: 'External examining'

Precept 1: An institution should ask its external examiners, in their expert judgement, to report on: ...academic standards...; ...assessment processes...; ...standards of student performance...; ...comparability of standards and student achievement...; ...good practice they have identified.

Precept 4: Institutions will make every effort to ensure that their external examiners are competent to undertake the responsibilities defined in their contract.

Section 6: 'Assessment of Students'

Precept 10: Institutions ensure that everyone involved in the assessment of students are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

Section 7: 'Programme approval, monitoring and review'

Precept 7: Institutions routinely monitor (in an agreed cycle) the effectiveness of their programmes (etc.).

and in the appended guidance: 'Is the quality of teaching maintained and enhanced through effective staff development, peer review of teaching, integration of part-time and visiting staff, effective team teaching, and induction and mentoring of new staff?'

Section 10: 'Recruitment and admissions'

Precept 2: Institutions' decisions regarding admissions to higher education are made by those equipped to make the required judgements and competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

(3) The form of mentoring/supervision and monitoring/review provided for graduate students who teach on behalf of the faculty/department. This could come via supervisors, course coordinators, subject tutors, or Directors of Undergraduate Studies.

(4) A description of the faculty/department's participation in the work of the CETL and its four-level programme of teacher development.

(5) The faculty/department's participation in the University's recognition of teaching award scheme.

10.5 Tutorial teaching

It is a frequent assumption on the part of external reviewers that faculties/departments will in some way monitor and/or direct the provision of tutorial teaching in the courses for which they are wholly or partly responsible. This assumption does not take account of the balance of responsibilities within the collegiate University, but faculties/departments have increasingly developed liaison or other mechanisms for relating faculty/department provision to tutorial teaching. These might include the faculty/department's mechanisms for:

(1) establishing teaching norms (including tutorial norms) for the different aspects of its provision in the courses for which it is wholly or jointly responsible.

(2) monitoring the linkages between the faculty/department's provision for students on its courses and the tutorial teaching provided for those courses.

(3) providing guidance on the general purpose and value of the different types of provision, including tutorial teaching.

10.6 Class teaching

The wider use of classes to supplement learning and teaching by means of tutorials and lectures has focused attention on the means available to faculties and departments to monitor the quality of such teaching. Where classes are given by members of the academic staff, many normal controls (e.g. mentoring, student feedback) will apply, but they will often be given by graduate students or contract research staff. Thought should be given to the initial training needs of such individuals, and to the use of feedback on class teaching. Faculties and departments need to be able to describe:

(1) Any guidance provided by the faculty/department (e.g. by the subject organiser) to assist those undertaking class teaching.

(2) Any form of monitoring of class teaching in place within the faculty/department.

(3) The form of training available to those (other than established academic staff) who are undertaking class teaching for the first time.

(4) Any form of mentoring/supervision provided within the faculty/department for those who are undertaking class teaching for the first time.

(5) The procedure by which the faculty/department would deal with complaints about the quality of class teaching from students, colleges, or other academic staff.

11. Postgraduate research degrees

see Precepts from Section 1 of the QAA Code of Practice Postgraduate Research Programmes – September 2004

<i>Institutional arrangements</i> 1. Institutions will put in place effective arrangements to maintain appropriate academic standards and enhance the quality of postgraduate research programmes.
2. Institutional regulations for postgraduate research degree programmes will be clear and readily available to students and staff. Where appropriate, regulations will be supplemented by similarly accessible, subject-specific guidance at the level of the faculty, school or department.
3. Institutions will develop, implement and keep under review a code or codes of practice applicable across the institution, which include(s) the areas covered by this document. The code(s) should be readily available to all students and staff involved in postgraduate research programmes.
4. Institutions will monitor the success of their postgraduate research programmes against appropriate internal and/or external indicators and targets.
<i>The research environment</i> 5. Institutions will only accept research students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research ¹ and where high quality research is occurring.
<i>Selection, admissions and induction of students</i> 6. Admissions procedures will be clear, consistently applied and will demonstrate equality of opportunity.
7. Only appropriately qualified and prepared students will be admitted to research programmes.
8. Admissions decisions will involve at least two members of the institution's staff who will have received instruction, advice and guidance in respect of selection and admissions procedures. The decision-making process will enable the institution to assure itself that balanced and independent admissions decisions have been made, that support its admissions policy.
9. The entitlements and responsibilities of a research student undertaking a postgraduate research programme will be defined and communicated clearly.
10. Institutions will provide research students with sufficient information to enable them to begin their studies with an understanding of the academic and social environment in which they will be working.
<i>Supervision</i> 11. Institutions will appoint supervisors who have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor research students effectively.
12. Each research student will have a minimum of one main supervisor. He or she will normally be part of a supervisory team. There must always be one clearly identified point of contact for the student.
13. Institutions will ensure that the responsibilities of all research student supervisors are clearly communicated to supervisors and students through written guidance.
14. Institutions will ensure that the quality of supervision is not put at risk as a result of an excessive volume and range of responsibilities assigned to individual supervisors.

11. Postgraduate research degrees

11.1 The greater length and more prescriptive tone of this section of the Code of Practice is clarified in the foreword to the section:

12 This section of the *Code* is written in a firmer style than some other sections, especially the precepts, to give institutions clear guidance on the funding councils', research councils' and Agency's expectations in respect of the management, quality and academic standards of research programmes. Institutions' use of the *Code* is monitored through the Agency's audit and review processes (see paragraph 7 above). In the case of this section, the outputs of these review processes will be used by other agencies, including the UK funding councils, for monitoring purposes.

11.2 This monitoring is now undertaken on behalf of HEFCE by the QAA through its regular cycle of institutional audit. The revised institutional audit method therefore requires audit teams to assess and report upon the extent to which institutional arrangements for securing the academic standards of awards and the quality of provision in postgraduate research degree programmes are in alignment with the guidance given in the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

11.3 The initial part of this monitoring was undertaken in QAA's 2006 Special Review of Research Degree Programmes. Drawing from the material provided by the University, the ensuing report identified one particular area for further consideration and a number of features of good practice.

The institution may wish to give further consideration to the following matter:

the extent to which the advisory nature of the good practice guidance for supervisor arrangements allows the existence of areas where there is a gap between what the student experiences and what is regarded as good practice.

The review team noted the following good practice:

- the focus on providing the highest possible quality of research facilities in which students are able to work as colleagues of academic and research staff
- active and enthusiastic engagement with the development of research and general skills training
- the rigorous transfer and confirmation stages as affording an assessment of student progress and development
- discussion about supervision involving both staff and students.

11.4 Much of the work undertaken as part of the 'Embedding Graduate Studies' agenda has specifically related to the issues raised in the Special Review report. In particular, the introduction of divisional codes of practice for supervision addresses the concern highlighted in the report about the potential gap between guidance and students' experience of supervision.

11.5 The earlier sections of this Handbook have covered most of the precepts set out in the Postgraduate Research Degrees section of the code as they are covered under the relevant headings: admissions, induction, examinations, student feedback, monitoring of teaching, complaints and appeals. The precepts are reprinted in full to remind faculties and departments that in any scrutiny of the University's provision for research degree programmes the areas will normally be assessed as a coherent package, and each of the elements will be expected to reach an appropriate standard.

Progress and review arrangements

15 Institutions will put in place and bring to the attention of students and relevant staff clearly defined mechanisms for monitoring and supporting student progress.

16 Institutions will put in place and bring to the attention of students and relevant staff clearly defined mechanisms for formal reviews of student progress, including explicit review stages.

17 Institutions will provide guidance to students, supervisors and others involved in progress monitoring and review processes about the importance of keeping appropriate records of the outcomes of meetings and related activities.

Development of research and other skills

18 Institutions will provide research students with appropriate opportunities for personal and professional development.

19 Each student's development needs will be identified and agreed jointly by the student and appropriate academic staff, initially during the student's induction period; they will be regularly reviewed during the research programme and amended as appropriate.

Feedback mechanisms

21 Institutions will put in place mechanisms to collect, review and, where appropriate, respond to feedback from all concerned with postgraduate research programmes. They will make arrangements for feedback to be considered openly and constructively and for the results to be communicated appropriately.

Assessment

22 Institutions will use criteria for assessing research degrees that enable them to define the academic standards of different research programmes and the achievements of their graduates. The criteria used to assess research degrees must be clear and readily available to students, staff and external examiners.

23 Research degree assessment procedures must be clear; they must be operated rigorously, fairly, and consistently; include input from an external examiner; and carried out to a reasonable timescale.

24 Institutions will communicate their assessment procedures clearly to all the parties involved, ie the students, the supervisor(s) and the examiners.

Student representations

25 Institutions will put in place and publicise procedures for dealing with student representations that are fair, clear to all concerned, robust and applied consistently. Such procedures will allow all students access to relevant information and an opportunity to present their case.

Complaints

26 Independent and formal procedures will exist to resolve effectively complaints from research students about the quality of the institution's learning and support provision.

Appeals

27 Institutions will put in place formal procedures to deal with any appeals made by research students. The acceptable grounds for appeals will be clearly defined.

11.6 Faculties and departments need to identify (i) the key expectations under each of the headings used in the precepts; and (ii) the key documentation to demonstrate attainment of those expectations. The lists provided below are not intended to be comprehensive but to assist in that process.

Key expectations	Key documentation
<i>Institutional arrangements</i> Effective and clear arrangements, regulations, codes of practice taking account of internal/external expectations	<i>Examination Regulations, Divisional Code of Practice for Supervision, Education Committee Policy and Guidance for Research Degrees, Handbooks/websites</i>
<i>The research environment</i> Appropriate indicators of a high quality research environment, with relevant support and training	<i>National and international rankings, RAE outcomes, RAE indicators of esteem, scholarships/studentships, links with research councils and charities</i>
<i>Selection, admissions and induction of students</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fair, comprehensible and timely procedures, • clear and understandable criteria of selection, • defensible procedures, • appropriate information re proper expectations and responsibilities, • guidance on academic & social environment 	<i>Graduate Prospectus Website information Policy and Guidance for Research Degrees (see annexe B) Faculty/departmental (or divisional) Handbooks College handbooks PGR Templates of Provision</i>
<i>Supervision</i> Who should supervise – expertise, support and oversight; Joint/co-supervision – numbers of supervisees; Responsibilities and expectations of the supervisor and of the research student	<i>Divisional Codes of Practice for Supervision Brief Guide to Supervision Exam Regulations (Memorandum of Guidance for Research students and supervisors) Education Committee Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees</i>
<i>Progress and review arrangements</i> Clarity about progress review and monitoring: how often, when and what Explicit information about required hurdles and consequences of unsatisfactory progress Sources of help and support for both student and supervisor	<i>Exam Regulations (Transfer and Confirmation) Mechanisms for progress review (online reporting, college review meetings) Handbooks/website information Education Committee Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications – doctoral (level 8) descriptors</i>
<i>Development of research and other skills</i> Faculty/departmental policy on (i) disciplinary research training skills; (ii) personal and professional skills; faculty/departmental mechanisms for alerting students to university/divisional provision Monitoring of skills needs and development	<i>Handbooks/website information Availability of faculty/departmental information re University/divisional provision Online reporting (to include skills) Access to Personal Development Planning (Aspire)</i>
<i>Feedback mechanisms/student representations</i> Clarity about how and where student feedback is considered; arrangements for student representation in faculty/department structures	<i>Clear and readily accessible information about internal/external mechanisms for feedback and arrangements for student representation</i>
<i>Assessment</i> Clear and comprehensible guidance about assessment requirements, procedures, timetables	<i>Exam Regulations Education Committee Policy and Guidance Information re examinations from the Graduate Office</i>

12. Collaborative provision and placement learning

See Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning) - September 2004

[\[http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section2/appendix.asp#append1\]](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section2/appendix.asp#append1)

This section of the Code of Practice has some thirty-six precepts. Attention is drawn to the following:

A1 The awarding institution is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name.
A3 Collaborative arrangements should be negotiated, agreed and managed in accordance with the formally stated policies and procedures of the awarding institution.
A4 An up-to-date and authoritative record of the awarding institution's collaborative partnerships and agents, and a listing of its collaborative programmes operated through those partnerships or agencies, should form part of the institution's publicly available information.
A10 There should be a written and legally binding agreement or contract setting out the rights and obligations of the parties and signed by the authorised representatives of the awarding institution and the partner organisation or agent.
A12 The awarding institution is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities offered through a collaborative arrangement is adequate to enable a student to achieve the academic standard required for its award. This applies equally to learning opportunities offered through FDL arrangements.
A17 The awarding institution should be able to satisfy itself that staff engaged in delivering or supporting a collaborative programme are appropriately qualified for their role, and that a partner organisation has effective measures to monitor and assure the proficiency of such staff.

Attention is also drawn to the separate section of the Code of Practice which deals with Placement learning, i.e. Section 9: Work-based and placement learning – January 2008

Placement is defined as 'a planned period of learning, normally outside the institution, at which the student is enrolled, where the learning outcomes are an intended part of a programme of study. It includes those circumstances where students have arranged their own learning opportunities with a placement provider, with the approval of the institution.'

Placement learning will encompass not only formal work placements (e.g. in Education and Social Studies, but year-abroad schemes, many fieldwork opportunities, and a range of project assignments.

The precepts from this section include:

1 Where work-based or placement learning is part of a programme of study, awarding institutions ensure that its intended learning outcomes are: (1) clearly identified; (2) contribute to the overall and coherent aims of their programme; (3) are assessed appropriately.
2 Awarding institutions are responsible for the academic standards of their awards and the quality of provision leading to them, and have in place policies and procedures to ensure that their responsibilities, and those of their partners involved in work-based and placement learning, are clearly identified and met.
3 Awarding institutions ensure that all partners providing work-based and placement learning opportunities are fully aware of their related and specific responsibilities, and that the learning opportunities provided by them are appropriate.
4 Awarding institutions inform students of their specific responsibilities and entitlements relating to their work-based and placement learning.
5 Awarding institutions provide students with appropriate and timely information, support and guidance prior to, throughout and following their work-based and placement learning.
6 Awarding institutions ensure that work-based and placement learning partners are provided with appropriate and timely information prior to, throughout and following the students' work-based and placement learning.
7 Awarding institutions ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their staff involved in work-based and placement learning are appropriately qualified, resourced and competent to fulfil their role(s) • where applicable, other educational providers, work-based and placement learning partners have effective measures in place to monitor and assure the proficiency of their staff involved in the support of the relevant work-based and placement learning.
8 Awarding institutions have policies and procedures for securing, monitoring, administering and reviewing work-based and placement learning that are used effectively and reviewed regularly.

12. Collaborative provision and placement learning

12.1 The QAA defines ‘collaboration’ as educational provision leading to an award, or to specific credit toward an award, of an awarding institution delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation’. It therefore covers a number of different forms of collaboration, ranging from jointly awarded degree programmes through to student exchanges and placements.

12.2 The University policy and expectations for collaborations is set out in the Education Committee’s *Policy and Guidance on Collaborative Provision of Education, including Placements and Exchanges*, available at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance/>.

12.3 The following should be noted in particular:

- Each collaboration needs a designated *academic head*, who will put in real time setting up the programme and guiding its operation from the Oxford end.
- Collaborations need *institutional support* beyond one energetic individual. They need the support of a critical mass of people in the faculty/department as well as a lead administrator. It is important to have a realistic assessment of what this institutional support will involve such as: admissions, interviewing, and debriefing of students, student supervision, coordination with colleges, and annual programme reviews.
- Education collaborations should be set up for a *finite* duration (3-5 years in the first instance), with annual *reviews* of the programme and a systematic appraisal in advance of the end of the first term.
- All collaborations, including placements and exchanges, should be accompanied by a *written agreement*. The exception to this is postgraduate research students registered at Oxford (and vice versa) who have been permitted by the relevant board to undertake their research in a well-founded laboratory outside of the University (see Examination Regulations 2007 p.904 for the arrangements that must be put in place in MPLS, which are repeated in Appendix three). However, written agreements should be put in place for placements and exchanges arranged for students undertaking work for fourth year science projects where such placements constitute a significant element of a project, due to their potential impact on students’ degree outcomes.
- Collaborations need a *budget* for the duration of the programme – including full teaching and administrative costs (such as academic time spent on programme set-up and operation) and projected fee income. It is critical to have clarity on financial arrangements between Oxford and the collaborating institution (e.g., whether fees will be paid to one or both institutions).
- Proposals for new or revised education collaborations should come from *faculties/departments to divisions to the Education Committee* for approval. For international collaborations, the Education Committee will consult with the Director of International Strategy.

Annexe A: Undergraduate admissions – Common Framework

The Common Framework (full title: ‘Undergraduate Admissions: A Common Framework for colleges, faculties and departments’)

(a) Admissions procedures in all subjects and in all colleges should be informed by three high-level objectives:

To attract applications from the most academically able individuals, irrespective of socio-economic, ethnic or national origin;

To ensure applicants are selected for admission on the basis that they are well qualified and have the most potential to excel in their chosen course of study;

To ensure that the prospects of admission are not affected by the college an applicant has chosen or been assigned to through an open application.

(b) For each subject, the procedures and criteria for deciding on short-listing and admission should be agreed by the relevant faculty in consultation with the relevant subject tutors in colleges.

(c) Procedures may vary between subjects, depending on the number of applications, whether there is pre-interview testing, whether they are part of a Joint School and other factors that the faculties in question may regard as relevant. In all subjects, procedures should be seen to be fair for candidates and should ensure that the best candidates are selected.

(d) All colleges should apply the agreed procedures and criteria for each subject consistently.

(e) In every subject, there should be a high degree of coordination by the relevant faculty and amongst the colleges. This should include robust arrangements for redistributing candidates between colleges before interview and at the final offer stage, so that the strongest candidates are able to find a place somewhere in the system.

(f) All subjects should have an agreed standard conditional offer.

(g) Contextual information in a common format (in particular, concerning school performance) should be provided to colleges by the Undergraduate Admissions Office so that this may be taken into account as systematically as possible.

(h) Final decisions on who should be interviewed and who should be offered a place should rest with individual colleges, giving due consideration to the guidance of the relevant subject faculty (see (i) (v) and (xii) below).

(i) In deciding on what procedures are appropriate for particular subjects, faculties and colleges should have regard to the following:

Short-listing for interview

i) The potential for the more popular subjects to be more stringent in their short-listing so as to allow adequate time for interviewing those who have been short-listed.

ii) Where pre-interview testing has not yet been introduced, the potential for pre-interview testing to assist with short-listing.

iii) The need to plan such testing carefully in accordance with the principles set out in paragraph 33 of the Working Party's report, especially to ensure that as far as possible they test for aptitude and do not dissuade good candidates from applying.

iv) The benefits to be had from central banding of candidates by the relevant faculty, based on information in application forms, pre-interview test results (where these exist), written work where requested and the assessment of ability and aptitude. For very large subjects, such banding for logistical reasons may need to be done for groups of colleges.

v) Colleges to be guided but not bound by such banding; but where a college wishes to interview a candidate below the short-listing threshold, it should explain this to the relevant faculty.

vi) Faculties should provide guidance to colleges on how they should consider submitted written work (both at short-listing and at interview stage).

Interviews

vii) The desirability of each short-listed candidate having a minimum of two interviews, and where appropriate in two separate colleges, and for these interviews, where possible, to be arranged in advance.

viii) Candidates applying to Joint Schools should be interviewed by at least one tutor in each of the subjects that make up the Joint School. This may be in a single panel, or by subject tutors separately, or in some other combination.

ix) The need for agreed interview criteria and an agreed interview mark scale, with guidelines to be

provided by the Undergraduate Admissions Office.

x) Before considering moving to college-blind interviewing¹, in view of its administrative implications for colleges, faculties should consult with the Undergraduate Admissions Office.

Final offers

xi) The benefits to be had from central banding by the relevant faculty at the final offer stage, based on the information already used for short-listing and the additional information available as a result of interviews and any testing during the interview process.

xii) Colleges to be guided but not bound by such banding. However, where a college wishes to offer a place to a candidate below the selection threshold, this should be done only on the basis of additional qualitative information that may not have been picked up in the banding exercise. It should not result from the application of criteria different from those that have been agreed by the faculty. Where a college wishes to offer a place to a candidate below the selection threshold it should explain this to the relevant faculty by reference to the selection criteria.

xiii) Where a college wishes to take a candidate who falls below the agreed standard conditional offer, the college should inform the relevant faculty and explain the individual's case with reference to the selection criteria.

xiv) Whilst successful candidates will normally be made an offer at a college where they have been interviewed, it may be necessary to redistribute some candidates to colleges where they have not been interviewed. In such cases, the candidates should be given the opportunity to visit the college offering the place prior to their having to make a decision.

(j) Timely sharing of all relevant information about candidates in each subject is critical. To achieve this, a common, effective and properly resourced IT system should be made available to all faculties and colleges.

(k) The collegiate university should monitor the applications from and offers made to UK students according to socio-economic background, ethnicity, gender, age, and school type. Where these do not reflect the qualification profile of particular groups, colleges and faculties should consider how the position could be addressed.

(l) Colleges and faculties should maintain well-targeted programmes to improve access for under-represented groups, with these programmes to be coordinated centrally.

(m) In considering overseas candidates, colleges and faculties should aim to apply the same criteria and as far as possible the same procedures as in the case of UK applicants.

(n) In all subjects, faculties should give serious consideration to the possibility of open offer² schemes. Colleges would be asked to opt in to these schemes.

To show that they are complying with this Common Framework, faculties will be required to report annually to the Admissions Executive (reporting to the Education Committee (formerly EPSC)) on the procedures in place for their subjects. Faculties will be expected to provide data on how their procedures are working in practice: one important indicator might be the extent of redistribution of candidates between colleges. It will be for the Education Committee to "sign off" on each subject or Joint School; and where the Education Committee feels unable to do so, it will indicate in which areas action is needed. The Education Committee will expect divisions to identify clearly the person or persons in their faculties who are responsible for admissions for their subjects. Faculties will also be required to agree any significant changes in procedures which they wish to introduce with the Admissions Executive.

Colleges already have to provide an annual "certificate of assurance" that they are operating their admissions systems fairly and efficiently. In future, colleges will be expected to state in this annual "certificate of assurance" that they are in compliance with the Common Framework as it affects them.

¹ Blind interviews are interviews conducted without tutors knowing their interviewees' college preference.

² Open offers are offers of a place without a college specification. Subject based open offer schemes reduce and may obviate the need for colleges to "over-offer" in particular subjects against the possibility of candidates failing to meet their offer conditions.

Annexe B: Graduate admissions – policy and guidance

Admissions procedures as set out in the Education Committee’s Policy and Guidance relating to (a) Taught Graduate Courses; (b) Research Degrees

2: Admissions and selection procedure

2.1. The University regards as an overriding priority the admission of suitably-qualified candidates well-matched to their chosen course. It seeks to select graduate students solely on the grounds of proven and potential academic excellence, and its admission procedures are geared to this end. This section deals especially with those parts of the admissions procedure that relate to the needs of applicants, and with a small number of requirements that are university-wide obligations.

Regulations

2.2. General regulations governing admission to taught graduate courses are set out in the general regulations for each degree awarded. These should be read in conjunction with the associated special regulations made by individual boards or departments.

Policy requirements relating to admissions procedures

Information for applicants

2.3. *An admitting body should aim to provide information relating to postgraduate taught courses that is clear, accurate and of sufficient detail to enable applicants to make informed choices. Admitting bodies should give careful consideration to the information available to candidates prior to accepting the offer of a place. As well as describing the formal structure of a taught course, information which indicates the range of expectations, entitlements and responsibilities of a graduate student undertaking a postgraduate course will be of particular value.*

Good Practice

2.4. This information may be found in the *Graduate Prospectus*, other preliminary literature or relevant web sites. Specific items might include:

- total university fees, including any legitimate additional charges, and an indication of approximate college fees;
- information about the course content, the normal length of study and the likely available facilities within the subject, the University and the student’s college;
- the name of the supervisor(s) (where this is known) and the likely supervisory arrangements;
- required qualifications and conditions contained in the taught course, e.g. whether a qualifying examination will have to be taken, arrangements for re-sits, any necessary language or other similar requirements;
- any requirements relating to attendance/residence, progress reports, contact with the supervisor(s), academic and performance;
- specific requirements relating to matters of general importance to the student’s

graduate career, e.g. (as applicable) health and safety, procedures relating to plagiarism and scientific misconduct; intellectual property rights;

- ❑ the possibilities and limitations on any teaching or demonstrating which the student may be able to undertake in the course of his or her graduate course. Particular care should be taken to include this information where the responsible body has concluded that it will not permit graduate taught course students to undertake any teaching or demonstrating.

2.5. In addition to these items, students who have been offered and accepted a place on a course should be provided with as much information as possible about the early stages of the course, including registration procedures, induction arrangements, any option choices which have to be made at an early stage, and any preliminary reading which they can undertake prior to arrival.

General requirements relating to admission procedures

2.6. *An admitting body should ensure that:*

- ❑ *admissions procedures are clear and consistently followed;*
- ❑ *admissions criteria, including the use of references, written work, and interviews (where these are possible) have been drawn up and are reviewed at regular intervals;*
- ❑ *admissions decisions involve the judgement of more than one member of the department/faculty's staff with relevant experience and expertise;*
- ❑ *admission offers make clear what the applicant must do: a) to take up the offer, b) to request deferral of entry, or c) if they fail to meet any conditions specified in the offer.*

2.7. *Admitting bodies should note the priority that the University places on the following:*

- ❑ *the obligation to admit only the number of graduate students for each taught course for whom appropriate supervision and support facilities are available;*
- ❑ *the maintenance of appropriate entrance qualifications and standards;*
- ❑ *the assurance that appropriate laboratory or bench space is available and that the total number of students admitted to a taught course involving experimental work is not too large for adequate supervision;*
- ❑ *the acknowledgement of divisional, faculty or departmental norms and maxima for the number of graduate students allocated to individual supervisors;*
- ❑ *prospective students are informed of any significant changes to a programme made between the offer of a place and the start of the course, and the options open to the student in those circumstances.*

English Language Requirements

2.8. *The University's English language requirements for individual programmes of study, is set at the Higher level for all taught postgraduate courses (as specified in the Graduate Prospectus) and must be met in full (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/postgraduate/apply/english.shtml>) unless a waiver has been approved.*

Equal Opportunities

2.9. *In the context of assessing applications and of the University's overriding criterion in relation to admissions set out at the beginning of this section, appropriate attention should be given to relevant equal opportunities principles and legislation.*

Special Needs

2.10. *Where students are admitted with special needs, care should be taken to ensure that an effective support structure is in place, and full information is available about sources of guidance and support within the University (see the entries relating to Disability on the A-Z of Academic Policies at http://dev.admin.ox.ac.uk/ac-div/oxonly/resources/A-Z_policies.shtml).*

First Degree Requirements

2.11 *There is no formal class of degree result required by the University for entry to graduate study, partly because of the need to be able to admit mature candidates qualified in other ways and also because the UK system of degree classification is not universal.*

Good Practice

2.11.1. Most faculties and departments follow the general requirements of the research councils which will not normally support students with less than a 2.1 (or its equivalent) for a research degree, and apply this to their expectations of taught course students. In considering applications from students who are less well-qualified, it is important to remember that in accepting a candidate a department or faculty is tacitly, if not explicitly, indicating its confidence in his or her capacity to undertake the programme in question.

Study and residence requirements

2.12. **Apart from those graduate taught courses which are specifically offered by means of part-time study, all other graduate taught courses are undertaken (for the required period of residence) on the basis of full-time supervised study in Oxford.**

2.13. **The residence limit for graduate students (other than those offered by means of part time study) is twenty-five miles from Carfax. Application can be made by a student's college for exemption from this limit to the Proctors, but it is the University's general expectation that candidates will only be accepted who can meet the residence requirement.**

Annexe C: Examinations – QAA precepts

Precepts from the QAA Code of Practice: Section 6 - Assessment of students

The precepts

General principles

1 As bodies responsible for the academic standards of awards made in their name, institutions have effective procedures for:

i designing, approving, monitoring and reviewing the assessment strategies for programmes and awards;

ii implementing rigorous assessment policies and practices that ensure the standard for each award and award element is set and maintained at the appropriate level, and that student performance is properly judged against this;

iii evaluating how academic standards are maintained through assessment practice that also encourages effective learning.

2 Institutions publicise⁴ and implement principles and procedures for, and processes of, assessment that are explicit, valid and reliable.

Contribution to student learning

3 Institutions encourage assessment practice that promotes effective learning.

Assessment panels and examination boards

4 Institutions publicise and implement effective, clear and consistent policies for the membership, procedures, powers and accountability of assessment panels and boards of examiners.

Conduct of assessment

5 Institutions ensure that assessment is conducted with rigour, probity and fairness and with due regard for security.

Amount and timing of assessment

6 Institutions ensure that the amount and timing of assessment enables effective and appropriate measurement of students' achievement of intended learning outcomes.

Marking and grading

7 Institutions have transparent and fair mechanisms for marking and for moderating marks.

8 Institutions publicise and implement clear rules and regulations for progressing from one stage of a programme to another and for qualifying for an award.

Feedback to students on their performance

9 Institutions provide appropriate and timely feedback to students on assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement but does not increase the burden of assessment.

Staff development and training

10 Institutions ensure that everyone involved in the assessment of students is competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

Language of study and assessment⁵

11 The languages used in teaching and assessment are normally the same. If, for any reason, this is not possible, institutions ensure that their academic standards are not consequently put at risk.

Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies' requirements

12 Institutions provide clear information to staff and students about specific assessment outcomes or other criteria that must be met to fulfil the requirements of PSRBs.

Assessment regulations

13 Institutions review and amend assessment regulations periodically, as appropriate, to assure themselves that the regulations remain fit for purpose.

Student conduct in assessment

14 Institutions encourage students to adopt good academic conduct in respect of assessment and seek to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities.

Recording, documenting and communicating assessment decisions

15 Institutions ensure that assessment decisions are recorded and documented accurately and systematically and that the decisions of relevant assessment panels and examination boards are communicated as quickly as possible.

Annexe D: Precepts from QAA Code of Practice Section 4 ‘External Examining’

The precepts

- 1 An institution should ask its external examiners, in their expert judgement, to report on:
 - i whether the academic standards set for its awards, or part thereof, are appropriate;
 - ii the extent to which its assessment processes are rigorous, ensure equity of treatment for students and have been fairly conducted within institutional regulations and guidance;
 - iii the standards of student performance in the programmes or parts of programmes which they have been appointed to examine;
 - iv where appropriate, the comparability of the standards and student achievements with those in some other higher education institutions;
 - v good practice they have identified.
- 2 Institutions should state clearly and communicate to all concerned the various roles, powers and responsibilities assigned to their external examiners, including the extent of their authority in examination/assessment boards.
- 3 Prior to the confirmation of mark lists, pass lists or similar documents, institutions will expect external examiners to endorse the outcomes of the assessment(s) they have been appointed to scrutinise.
- 4 Institutions will make every effort to ensure that their external examiners are competent to undertake the responsibilities defined in their contract.
- 5 Institutions should define explicit policies and regulations governing the nomination and appointment of external examiners, and premature termination of the contract by either party.
- 6 Institutional procedures should ensure that potential conflicts of interest are identified and resolved prior to the appointment of external examiners.
- 7 Institutions should ensure that, once appointed, external examiners are provided with sufficient information and support to enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Specifically, external examiners must be properly prepared by the recruiting institution to ensure they understand and can fulfil their responsibilities.
- 8 Institutions should state clearly, and communicate to all concerned, the programmes and awards, or parts of programmes, to which each external examiner is appointed.
- 9 Institutions will wish to agree with their external examiners the evidence each considers necessary to ensure the effective discharge of external examining responsibilities, and will provide them with a range of relevant information.
- 10 Institutions should require external examiners to submit at agreed times a written report that provides comments and judgements on the assessment process and the standards of student attainment.
- 11 Institutions should indicate the required form and coverage of external examiners' reports.
- 12 Institutions should ask external examiners to send their reports to the head of the institution, or named person(s) designated by the head of the institution to exercise responsibility for the handling of these reports. Institutions should ensure that the reports are

considered within the institution at both subject and institutional levels.

13 Full and serious consideration should be given by the institution to comments and recommendations contained within external examiners' reports, and the outcomes of the consideration, including actions taken, should be formally recorded.

14 Institutions should ensure that external examiners are, within a reasonable time, provided with a considered response to their comments and recommendations, including information on any actions taken by the institution.