Education and Training Committee

**TEACHING QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE :
INTERIM REPORT AND REQUEST FOR RESPONSE**

from the Higher Education Funding Council for England
via the Executive

for discussion and decision

Executive Summary

The Quality Enhancement (QE) of teaching in Higher Education is being promoted by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on behalf of all stakeholders UK wide.

This present interim report comes with a covering letter requesting views from HPC. The letter is written by Dr. Jim Port from JM Consulting, and he also acted as consultant to HEFCE for this exercise and wrote the report adopted by DoH in 1996 as the basis on which the HPO was drafted, so he has a thorough understanding of HPC.

The two questions posed in Jim Port's letter interact with the discussions held on CPD for HE teaching staff in the consultation. Views expressed there could be shared with HEFCE.

Eventually HPC's CPD scheme should have significant implications for QE for teaching staff. In the shorter term the AHPF competence project is looking at continued and enhanced competence for teaching staff in the professions as registrants. This approach from HEFCE should be remitted also to them.

The discussions held with the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) to date by both CPSM / HPC, and UKCC / NMC have been – at ILT's instigation – around ILT deferring to health professionals' own CPD schemes rather than vice-versa.

The interim report itself broadly supports and commends the work of the bodies CPSM / HPC has been dealing with, viz. LTSN and QAA, but is more cautious about ILT's contribution and prospects.

Para. 2.40 specifically recognises the locus of bodies such as HPC in QE.

Section 5 makes recommendations about external examiners around creating a consistent and robust scheme. This would be a useful support to HPC's (and other stakeholders') QA work.

The report generally provides the context and background information for how AHPF and HPC can best engage in QE in the longer term.

Mr Marc Seale
Chief Executive and Registrar
Health Professions Council
Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU

20th September 2002

Dear Colleague

Arrangements to support quality enhancement in Higher Education.

You may be aware that a committee chaired by Sir Ron Cooke is reviewing the agencies that support the enhancement of quality in teaching and learning in higher education. I am writing, as a consultant to the committee, to give you an opportunity to comment on the issues the committee is addressing, from the perspective of a professional body that has a stake in the outputs of higher education.

A note on the membership of the committee, and its work so far, is available at www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/tqec. For convenience, I enclose a short summary of the issues the committee is reviewing and its membership. The committee is expecting to produce a report with recommendations around the end of the year.

While much of the committee's work is essentially internal to the HE sector, I think there are two inter-related sets of issues here which may be of interest to professional and statutory bodies like yourselves:

a. are there any requirements or developments that would you would wish to see built into any future quality enhancement agenda in the HE sector? (Put another way, do you have views about the quality of HE teaching and learning, or how it could be improved, made more professional etc?)

b. as the sector is currently having a debate about the respective roles of individual professionals (HE teachers), their employers (universities and colleges) and their professional bodies (i.e. the new Institute for Teaching and Learning), are there any points from your own profession that you would like to draw to Sir Ron's attention to inform the review.
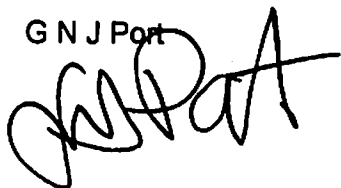
It seems likely that the committee will recommend some change in the configuration of the agencies (chiefly HESDA, ILT and LTSN) which currently support teaching and learning in HE. It is important that any such change is informed by a strategic view of

the quality enhancement needs in higher education and I hope the committee will set out a new medium-term agenda for this.

I would be grateful for any comments, papers or other information you might wish to draw to our attention within a timescale of about a month (i.e. by 31st October if possible). If you would like a chance to discuss this, or have any other questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

G N J Port

News and events

☒ Section banner

Search

10 September 2002

Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee: interim report

The Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee (TQEC) has submitted its interim report on the roles and relationships of the three main agencies concerned with the enhancement of learning and teaching quality in higher education. The agencies are:

- Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA)
- Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN)
- The Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT).

The TQEC was established by the Higher Eductaion Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Universities UK (UUK) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) to review the arrangements that support the enhancement of quality in learning and teaching in higher education, in the context of the funding bodies' strategies. It will make recommendations to avoid overlap, measure impact and improve relationships. It will also recommend ways to promote better induction and support of external examiners, and of external members of quality assurance review panels. (The terms of reference and membership of the TQEC are available).

All three agencies are playing a full role in the work and deliberations of the TQEC; their chairmen are members of the Committee. The continuation of the work undertaken by the three agencies is not in question.

Interim report: key points

The TQEC has delivered an interim report to the HEFCE, UUK and SCOP covering the first phase of its work. A final report will be delivered in December 2002.

The Committee has organised focus groups to access the views of pro vice-chancellors, lecturers and educational developers. It will continue to consult colleagues in higher education as it develops and refines its recommendations.

The key points in the interim report are:

- The quality enhancement of learning and teaching is primarily the responsibility of higher education institutions, and the subject groups and individuals within them. The role of the agencies is to support those organisations and individuals.

- The agencies have agreed to do more to inform colleagues in higher education about their respective roles and responsibilities. The agencies will harmonise their work with existing plans and priorities, and consider jointly the best approaches to minimise duplication, overlaps and discontinuities between their work. This will include considering a single

hub website to facilitate access by user groups. The TQEC welcomes the agreement between the agencies as a significant first step forward.

- The TQEC intends to map out its understanding of the quality enhancement agenda over the next decade. This agenda will be one of the main drivers of any change in structure and funding for quality enhancement arrangements. The services provided to support quality enhancement must meet the changing needs of the user groups in higher education, as they respond to the challenges of a mass higher education system.

- In the light of the quality enhancement agenda, the TQEC will evaluate a number of structural options for consideration by the Boards of the agencies and other stakeholders. These options will include alternatives for the roles and funding of the existing agencies.

- The TQEC intends to make recommendations about the induction and support of external examiners, and of external members of quality assurance review panels. In doing so, it recognises that institutions themselves are primarily responsible for ensuring that robust systems are in place, and monitored independently, to deliver an effective system of external examining.

ENDS

TEACHING QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

INTERIM REPORT

Contents

Interim report: September 2002

2

TEACHING QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

INTERIM REPORT: SUMMARY

1. The Committee has been established to review the arrangements that support institutions, subject communities and individual members of staff on enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in higher education. This means it is considering the roles and relationships of the four main teaching quality agencies:

   - The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)
   - Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA)
   - The Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT)
   - Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN)

   and how far they meet the needs of users in an efficient and effective manner.

2. The initial research indicated that there are other organisations which contribute to the provision of such support, e.g. SEDA, JISC, SRHE. Moreover, the Funding Bodies play a significant role through relevant policies and initiatives.

3. The Committee strongly endorses the view that quality enhancement primarily rests with institutions, their staff and students, with the agencies and other bodies supporting and assisting those endeavours.

4. Initial research with users (university and college senior managers, as well as those who develop courses, and those who teach them) confirms that they perceive a complex system, where the roles of the four agencies are not seen as sharply delineated or well communicated, and with some gaps in provision, some overlaps or duplication of effort, and some competition between the agencies. These views apply less to QAA, whose role is seen as relatively distinct (i.e. monitoring of quality and standards rather than quality enhancement per se).

5. This is not a criticism of the individual agencies, or their staff. The four agencies have different origins, history, managerial structures, funding regimes, and mechanisms for consulting users. They are each rightly pursuing their own objectives and can report significant achievements. All of the agencies have been formed relatively recently and separately. Whilst inter-agency discussions have occurred, the sector has not set these within an overarching strategic context.

6. Part of this context is the rapid changes in the size and nature of the student population associated with the Government's targets for widening participation. It also includes:

   - developments in learning and teaching methods and in Information and Communications Technology (ICT);

   - the needs of a much broader social mix of students – including adults; those in full-time employment; those with very different prior experience and qualifications;

- issues of retention of students;

- and, the employability of graduates.

The Committee believes that these factors combine to create a new medium-term quality enhancement (QE) agenda, which should be one of the main drivers of any change in the QE arrangements. Whilst other bodies such as government and the funding bodies do, and will continue to influence the agenda, this review offers an important opportunity for the sector and, indeed, the agencies.

7. In response to the substantial convergence of views within the sector about the primary focus of the assurance function of the QAA, the Committee, with the agreement of QAA, decided to focus initial attention upon 3 agencies (HESDA, ILT, LTSN).

8. Evidence from the focus groups revealed a need to achieve *a more rational and easily accessible structure* which provides the maximum support to staff and institutions in as cost effective a manner as possible, maximising the value for investment, public or institutional. To achieve this, the groups identified the need for greater inter-agency collaboration and co-ordination, particularly on communication and dissemination strategies. The creation of a single prospectus of roles and activities and joint press releases would be helpful. Many respondents favoured the creation of a single quality enhancement portal, with free and easy access to all of the resources. That is part of the agenda which HESDA, ILT and LTSN have agreed to pursue collaboratively as part of a new protocol.

9. Collaboration and co-ordination between the agencies could better support the key priorities cited by the focus groups:-

- helping institutions, departments and individuals understand and respond to the quality enhancement implications of widening participation
- developing effective pedagogical and curricular approaches which will improve student retention, enhance employability and demonstrate explicit standards of achievement
- addressing the needs of lifelong learning and work based learning
- assisting staff and institutions develop materials and practice for, and evaluation of, e-learning, in a variety of formats and modes
- aiding the adoption of different approaches to learning and their adaption to specific settings, both disciplinary and institutional
- enabling more coherent, accredited and continuing provision for staff development
- sharing experiences of involving students in curriculum design and of making effective use of the views of students in quality enhancement
- raising the profile of learning and teaching
- promoting innovation.

10. The Committee intends to do more work to define this new agenda, and to evaluate a set of new structural options, which will include a single QE agency. This will need some further research and consultation in the sector, and with a range of groups including the teaching unions, students, and employers. This will lead to a final report by 31 December 2002.

4

11. In the interim, the Committee commends the ILT, LTSN and HESDA for agreeing to institute a new co-ordinating and communication mechanism, to minimise undesirable duplication and gaps in their work and to ensure more "joined-up" interfaces with their users. It also wishes to encourage a debate in the sector about the priorities for quality enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment and the implications of these for institutions, subject communities and individual members of staff and of the most appropriate ways of supporting these needs.

12. The Committee supports the plans of Universities UK (UUK), the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) and The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to maintain and strengthen high standards within the existing institutionally owned system of external examiners. This will be achieved through the articulation and enhancement of the arrangements for the induction for, and support of, external examiners. These arrangements will include looking at the way in which consistency of good practice can be achieved and monitored across the sector. The Committee supports the principle that a suitable means of voluntary accreditation should be discussed and developed.

13. The Committee will submit a final report by 31 December 2002.

Interim report: September 2002

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This is an interim report of the Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee (TQEC), chaired by Professor Sir Ron Cooke.

1.2. The terms of reference and membership details are attached at Annex A.

1.3. When first conceived, the frame of reference for the Committee's work was the quality enhancement arrangements for England. For this reason, the Scottish and Welsh funding bodies agreed to join the TQEC as observers. However, the work of the TQEC in progress has demonstrated that it has implications for the United Kingdom (UK). With observer status on the TQEC, the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) have commented that they will wish to reserve their position on the TQEC's recommendations.

1.4. Briefly, the purpose of the Committee is to consider the value and relationships of the agencies (QAA, HESDA, ILT, LTSN) responsible for supporting institutions in promoting the enhancement of teaching and student learning, and to make recommendations to avoid overlap, measure impact and value, and improve relationships.

1.5. At the second meeting of the TQEC, in response to a request from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), members agreed to add to the terms of reference responsibility for looking at ways of promoting better induction of, and support for, external examiners.

1.6. This report covers the first phase of work done by the Committee. It describes the needs and views of users, and the activities and finances of the agencies. This initial work, based on the current arrangements, has identified that there is now a complex and fragmented system for quality enhancement, with few practitioners having a clear view of the terrain. It also suggests that there is probably scope to achieve better support to institutions, and better value for money through reform of the way the system works. Some initial improvements can be made immediately, and these are recommended in Chapter 4.

1.7. More significant improvements can probably be achieved through more fundamental structural reform. However, such reforms should not just be a response to short-term issues, nor should they be confined to the work of the agencies. They should take account of:

- the changing priority and role of QE in the sector;

- the respective roles of institutions, individuals and discipline groups;

- the different form of governance of the agencies;

- the significant changes already underway in the size and nature of the higher education (HE) student population, and in learning and teaching methods and technologies.

These factors could be said to define the emerging medium-term agenda for QE.

1.8. The Committee has already started work on developing this agenda, and the more fundamental reforms it may require. It will be necessary to develop

alternative scenarios for the number and role of the QE agencies, and their funding and relationship to users. It will be necessary to consult users and the agencies on the benefits and implications of these alternatives. This process could potentially lead to a significant restructuring of the agencies involved in QE, but it will not be uncontroversial, and it is right to take enough time to work through all these implications carefully.

1.9. This report is therefore an interim one from the Committee. It describes the work so far, and it makes some interim recommendations for streamlining the work of the agencies and improving co-ordination between them. It also summarises the progress made so far on the more fundamental issues. Finally, it explains the process which the Committee will use to complete this work, which is expected to lead to more radical recommendations for change in the medium-term.

7

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Definition and scope

2.1. Quality enhancement is not a new concept. It has always been and remains one of the principal concerns of institutions, their staff and students, although until recently it has received less attention at a national and policy level than has quality assurance (QA), now the main role of the QAA.

2.2. In relation to teaching, learning and assessment QE has been defined by Dr Peter Milton (QAA) as "taking deliberate steps to improve the quality of the learning opportunities made available to students". That definition includes matters such as infrastructure, equipment and other resources. These have been dealt with in separate studies. Here the focus is generally narrower, relating to the quality of student learning and achievement although on occasion reference is made to wider issues and influences.

2.3. This definition makes an important point about the scope and purpose of QE - its focus on improving outcomes for students. It would be taking too narrow a view of QE to assume that it is just about the needs of HE staff, or about developing an intellectually rewarding process. It is equally important that QE brings actual and perceived benefits to the whole student learning experience.

Recent history

2.4. Quality Assurance and Enhancement processes in higher education have been in a state of development in recent years. The most significant drivers and changes have included the following.

2.5. The work done in the 1990s by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) which had both quality audit and QE as distinct functions and which was in some senses ahead of its time in its approach. HEQC built upon the earlier work of the CNAA and, in particular, its Quality Support Group.

2.6. The creation in 1997 of the QAA, on the recommendation of the Joint Planning Group and strongly endorsed in the Dearing Report, and the extensive national debates around the development of their new processes for QA, now revised as a lighter-touch process.

2.7. The shift from regulation to enhancement recognising the primary role and responsibility of institutions.

2.8. The development of institutional strategies for learning and teaching, (in Scotland for Quality Enhancement) strongly driven by the requirement from a range of partners including: the funding bodies; employers; schools and colleges; and required to concentrate on QE as well as QA.

2.9. A range of funding and support for the development of learning and teaching through the HEFCE/ Department for Employment and Learning – Northern Ireland (DEL) Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF), and different, but related initiatives in Scotland and Wales.

2.10. The Dearing Report proposed the creation of an Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Dearing proposed that the functions of the Institute would relate to the enhancement of learning and teaching and fall into three major categories:

- The accreditation of teacher education programmes

- Research and development in learning and teaching

- Stimulation of innovation in learning and teaching.

2.11. The establishment in 2000 of the LTSN as a major 5-year programme of the funding bodies to develop good practices, primarily in subject related QE, but also with a supporting generic capability.

2.12. Developments in QA and QE processes initiated by professional and statutory bodies (e.g. in health, engineering) which have a role in approving HE programmes.

2.13. The continuing work of HESDA (formerly UCoSDA) which has been the leading institutional membership body for staff development for many years.

2.14. The introduction of fees (subsequently rescinded in Scotland) paid by home students and the growth in the importance of overseas students, coupled with increasing competition between institutions have all generated a greater interest in indicators of quality and league tables. This has been strengthened by the increasing pressure on public finances, and the growth of consumerism in society generally.

2.15. The increasing attention paid to the needs of employers and students.

The Higher Education context

QE in higher education institutions

2.16. It is worth remembering that, over the past 12 years (to 1999/2000), student numbers in higher education have grown by about 70%; and average funding for teaching per student has fallen by 37%. Staff numbers have grown by about 18% over the six years to 2000/01.

2.17. As noted above, QE is assuming growing importance for institutions, and there are a growing number of agencies and initiatives in this field.

2.18. QE is primarily an academic issue, but as already noted it is not solely one for academics. QE has a wide remit which embraces the whole student experience. Staff other than academics make important contributions to learning, teaching and assessment, and if QE is extended to include the whole student experience, it potentially involves all other staff groups in higher education.

2.19. Institutions, discipline groups and individual members of staff each have distinctive roles to play in the quality enhancement of the educational experience of students. To some degree there are connections and overlaps. Communicating the nature of each role to students is a demanding and important challenge. The agencies support, measure, and stimulate QE, but they have no direct role in the delivery of outcomes to students.

2.20. There is an important issue about how within institutions to connect these dimensions. The connections are not all well developed. However, in terms

9

of accountability for delivery to students, *QE is fundamentally a responsibility of management in institutions*, and of the busy individual professionals in higher education, who are employed by those institutions.

2.21. In the long-term, the successful development of QE in HE remains therefore a strategic issue for institutions. Several strategic domains are involved notably institutional learning and teaching (L&T) and/or quality enhancement (QE) and Human Resource (HR) strategies, but other institutional strategies (e.g. for widening participation, infrastructure, Information Systems (IS)/ Information Technology (IT)) are also relevant. At the current stage of development in institutions, it is not yet the norm for these strategies all to be fully articulated, or integrated one with the others.

The developing agenda for QE

2.22. The key strategic context for QE in higher education includes the following factors:

- the continuing growth and diversification of the student population – with consequent new emphases in learning and teaching (such as study skills)
- the associated development of new methods of learning and teaching – problem based learning, online, simulations, group working etc
- more flexible delivery, including part-time and distance learning, work based learning, the 24/7 campus etc
- technology to support this: e-learning and use of Information and communication technology (ICT) by teachers and learners
- the recognition that the primary responsibility for QE rests with institutions and their staff and students and the emerging commitment, explicitly in Scotland, to the principle of continuing quality improvement.

2.23. The conclusion voiced in some focus groups is that this is a period of very significant change in learning and teaching, some of which will have implications for QE which are not necessarily yet fully identified or recognised.

2.24. It is a characteristic of teaching that there may be many different approaches which are all equally valid, both within and between disciplines, and there is no standard model, or even accepted universal wisdom, about which approach is most appropriate or effective in particular circumstances. This leads to a diversity which is rightly regarded as a strength of UKHE, and requires a sophisticated approach to external support of QE which consequently has to recognise a wide range of approaches and starting points.

2.25. The Committee is seeking to gather evidence on the medium-term QE, needs of institutions and individual staff in order to inform discussions on the arrangements required to support QE. An initial view of this agenda is presented below. The Committee intends to do further work on this, including further consultation in the sector, during the second phase of its work.

The existing agencies

2.26. There are four agencies working specifically in the area of QE. These are QAA, HESDA, ILT, and LTSN. The four agencies have different origins, history, managerial structures, governance arrangements, funding regimes, and mechanisms for consulting users.

2.27. QAA's role in supporting QE is less direct than that of the other three agencies. Its relationship with the sector is primarily monitoring and diagnostic rather than developmental. However, it contributes to QE through measuring and reflecting quality, establishing benchmarks for standards and QA criteria and producing codes of practice.

2.28. For the present, the Committee has agreed that the central thrust of QAAs work can be differentiated from that of the other agencies. With the agreement of the QAA, it has been decided that the main focus of the Committee's work will be concerned with the other three agencies - HESDA, ILT and LTSN.

2.29. These three agencies are all working in the sphere of human resource development (HRD) and QE in higher education. The market segments occupied by these three agencies are different, but overlapping. Briefly, we could summarise their roles as follows.

2.30. HESDA is an institutional membership, not-for-profit, training and standards organisation that supports all staff groups and all activities in higher education and contributes to QE by raising knowledge, skills and awareness in the workforce and in employing organisations which form its corporate members. It has the status of a company limited by guarantee and is directed by a Council made up of sector representatives including nominees of its parent bodies UUK and SCOP. Its annual income is approximately £1.3m. At present it receives no direct public funding but provides contractually based services. Notable amongst the latter has been the work as the National Training Organisation (NTO) for higher education.

2.31. ILT is a professional membership body for all who teach and support learning in higher education in the UK. It has 12,000 individual members, and has accredited 121 institutional programmes of qualifying training. It contributes to QE by defining entry standards and accrediting qualifying training for individual members, and by providing advice and services to its members. It is a registered charity directed by a Council made up of elected and co-opted members, plus observers from the DfES, funding councils and sector bodies.

2.32. As a membership organisation, ILT is not intended to be a publicly-funded body. It received start-up funding, predominantly from the funding bodies (approximately £1.5m in 1999 and £0.5m in 2000). HEFCE has recently agreed to provide an additional £250,000 in grant to the ILT.

2.33. ILT has an annual income of approximately £1.4m derived from its membership and accreditation fees. It also has grant income from the funding bodies related to the "restricted fund" activities of the LTSN which is constitutionally a division of ILT.

2.34. LTSN is a programme, funded by the UK funding bodies. Its role is to support all institutions and all practitioners in learning and teaching and to develop and disseminate good practices, primarily on a subject-related basis, but also with a central generic capability. It is answerable to a

11

steering committee established by the funding bodies, and as noted above is located within ILT as the host organisation. The total grant cost of LTSN is approximately £40m spread over 5 years.

2.35. The funding and business aspects of the work of these agencies, including the financial prospects and funding of the ILT, are covered in more detail in the next chapter.

The medium-term agenda for QE

2.36. The Committee has had some initial discussion of the developing and continuing QE agenda, and the type of vision that the sector should be working towards in this field.

2.37. More work needs to be done on this over the Summer 2002, followed by some consultation in the sector.

2.38. However, as a starting point, the Committee suggests that it would not be unreasonable for the sector to articulate broad goals for different dimensions of quality enhancement. For example, the sector could agree that by 2010 all new HE teachers are prepared and inducted to a suitable professional standard for their roles in learning and teaching in HE. That would involve institutions giving clear and visible encouragement to all staff contributing directly to the learning experience of suitable students to achieve a suitable level of professional recognition in learning and teaching and providing appropriate support for induction and continuing professional development. The Committee is aware that the NUS and the National Postgraduate Committee support these principles.

2.39. The Committee are well aware of the understandable sensitivities in institutions and amongst some academic staff, especially when a significant proportion currently satisfy the standards of relevant professional bodies. Nevertheless, it should be possible to encourage and implement proposals for voluntary recognition in learning and teaching both in induction and in Continuing Professional Development (CPD), codes of ethics etc, akin to comparable professions.

2.40. The remainder of the developing and continuing QE agenda would be related to whatever objective the Committee agree in this area. However, some key principles that can be suggested at this stage include:

- The agenda should relate to the needs of the range of user groups in HE

- It should recognise the different roles of the key contributors in this process (institutions, individuals, disciplines, agencies, Professional and Statutory Bodies (PSBs)

- It should be broad enough in scope to cover the whole student experience, and not solely related to the needs or aspirations of HE academic staff

- It should meet the needs of the new learning environment, and new policy environment, including a focus on student retention, and graduate employability.

2.41. The Committee has suggested some key attributes for supporting

12

arrangements. They should be:

- High quality (how to ensure this is a challenge; it is clearly not just about high intellectual content or the perceptions of scholars. It will need to achieve desired change, and meet stakeholder satisfaction)

- Fit for purpose (taking account for example, of the changing nature of the student population)

- Accessible (to all staff and institutions who need it)

- Sensitive to the institutional, discipline and student context

- Strategic (making a real contribution to identified needs, and supporting the delivery of the new policy environment for learning and teaching)

- Making minimum burdens on hard-pressed academic staff

- Maximising the value of public investment (and minimising the degree of top-slicing from teaching budgets)

- Responsive (managed in a user-focused manner)

- Capable of accommodating the commitment that teaching and learning practitioners are prepared to make to their initial preparation and continuing development.

2.42. The next phase of work will use these criteria to examine existing arrangements and possible future configurations of agencies including the net benefits of working towards a single agency for QE.

2.43. These points will be evaluated and developed for the Committee's final report in December 2002.

3. SERVING THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Introduction

3.1. The first section of this chapter is based upon views expressed at fifteen focus groups.

3.2. That is subsequently supplemented by reference to additional sources of information. The first section addresses two set of questions:

User needs and views

- What do users need?
- How do they perceive the current agencies?
- How well do the agencies meet these needs?
- Are there gaps or overlaps in their current activities?

The agencies' funding and business model

- How are the agencies funded?
- How cost effective are these arrangements?

Users needs and users views

Focus Groups

3.3. In order to access the views of users, fifteen focus groups were organised. A good sample of academics was achieved with at least three groups covering the views of Pro-Vice-Chancellors (PVCs), lecturers and educational developers respectively. The sample accessed views from the four parts of the UK and from a range of institutions.

3.4. In the next phase of work, focus groups will also be held with students and employers. We shall also need to address issues arising from HE in further education colleges (FECs), and issues arising from partnerships for progression between schools/FECs and HEIs.

3.5. Organisers of the focus groups were provided with a short briefing on the work of the TQEC and were asked to report on the discussions of four key sets of issues, namely:

1(a) In what ways – and to what degrees of effectiveness and relevance – do HESDA, ILT, LTSN and QAA inform and help to enhance practice in relation to learning, teaching and assessment?

1(b) How might this provision be made more effective, accessible and relevant?

2(a) How do the agencies compare and relate to other sources of support for enhancing learning, teaching and assessment (e.g. professional bodies, subject associations, institutional projects, development centres, the academic literature, faculty or departmental committees?)

2(b) How might the work of the agencies more effectively complement these and other sources of support?

3(a) What are the key emerging priorities and areas/topics in relation to the provision of support for enhancing the quality of learning, teaching and assessment?

3(b) How should they be addressed, and by whom?

4(a) How are individual, departmental and institutional needs currently supported and what roles do the agencies play in this?

4(b) What improvements could be made?

3.6. Finally, they were invited to report any other issues and comments.

3.7. A rich array of comments were reported. Whilst views varied, both within and between groups, there was substantial agreement on a number of points.

Views about the Agencies

(a) QAA

The QAA was perceived as having set threshold standards, encouraging reflection and raising the profile of learning and teaching, although concern was expressed over possible negative impacts such as stifling innovation and fostering compliance rather than enhancement. Hopes were expressed that the new arrangements would encourage greater ownership and accommodate desired flexibility, whilst maintaining a key role in facilitating reflection upon, and benchmarking of, practice in learning, teaching and assessment.

(b) HESDA

HESDA was not generally viewed as playing an important role in quality enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment. Reference was made to the role of training subject reviewers for QAA and in the continuing production of resources, reports and briefing papers, although some noted that teaching, learning and assessment matters had not featured prominently in recent years. Few respondents made any direct formal structural connection to the emergence of the ILT. HESDA was seen as focusing upon management development, and the development of support staff.

(c) ILT

Views on the ILT ranged, partly for philosophical reasons, partly technical ones. There were ILT members in the focus groups and on some issues, their views differed from non-members. For example, members have privileged access to materials and events. Non-members argued that universal access to these resources would be desirable for the purposes of quality enhancement. Both members

Interim report: September 2002

and non-members had divided views over the current standards and value-for-money of the ILT.

Positive views were expressed about the growth of ILT accredited programmes for new lecturers and associated support staff. Linked to that issue was a recurrent desire that the setting of standards for CPD should be seen as a priority. There was support for the ILT concentrating upon the roles of accrediting initial and continuing professional standards. It was argued that the ILT should adopt a higher profile in promoting Learning and Teaching, both within and beyond the academy.

Some participants speculated that without continuing institutional support and commitment, some ILT members may see little incentive to maintain their membership.

(d)   LTSN

The Generic Centre (GC) and the Subject Centres of LTSN attracted mixed responses, largely depending upon levels of knowledge and personal engagement. There was consensus that LTSN had considerable potential and that it may be premature to judge achievement. The positive opinions broadly correlated with personal involvement either with a specific Subject Centre or a particular initiative. Equally, some of the sharpest criticisms reflected disappointments arising from such engagements. Many found it difficult to reach over-arching conclusions on impact. Uncertainty was expressed about the nature of the relationship between the Generic Centre and the Subject Centres, and over the respective roles of the LTSN Generic Centre and ILT.

The roles of other bodies

3.8.   Several focus groups drew attention to other significant players in the area of quality enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment. The most frequently mentioned was the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA). It pioneered the accreditation of programmes for the initial development of university teachers and has a strong record in producing materials and publications and in organising developmental events. The Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) organises a high profile annual conference, has a substantial number of research publications and collaborates with other bodies on various initiatives and topical events. Recently the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) has produced studies, briefing papers and resources for specialists working in support of learning and teaching. Additionally, reference was made to the array of initiatives, programmes and strategies of the funding bodies and to the associated support structures which have been put in place, e.g. the National Co-ordinating Team (NCT) which supports the various strands of the TQEF. Interestingly, no reference was made to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) projects, although these are specifically intended to inform practice and enhance learning.

16

3.9. There was a broad consensus that users would benefit if there was better co-ordination of provision, better targeting of activities and resources and easier access to coherent high-quality materials and information. Many respondents favoured the creation of a single quality enhancement portal, with free access to all of the resources. It was recognised that this objective could pose problems for the ILT, since the organisation must provide dedicated services to its members, but it was hoped that these issues could be overcome. Many respondents indicated gaps in their knowledge of the work of specific agencies and urged better communication and a mapping of the terrain.

3.10. Mention was also made of the potential usefulness of distinguishing the primary client group(s) of each agency and of linking the activities of the agencies to strategies and policies of the funding bodies, as a means of achieving better connectivity and targeting. Managers favoured this approach, whereas academic staff expressed some discomfort with top-down approaches and externally imposed agendas.

Relationship of the agencies to other sources of support

3.11. Professional and statutory bodies (PSBs) were viewed as a strong, although not always progressive, influence upon learning, teaching and assessment. Some subject associations were seen as being particularly active, others less so. Staff and educational developers were influenced by the academic literature, which also permeated and informed the accredited programmes which almost all institutions now provide for the initial preparation of teaching staff. The majority of Pro-Vice-Chancellors emphasised the key role of the institutional development strategy and provision, and of the associated centre(s), programmes and projects. In England, TQEF funds were reported as having played an important role in raising the profile of quality enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment. Both QAA and LTSN work with PSBs and subject associations, although views were divided on the effectiveness of current relationships. The ILT also works with PSBs in establishing routes to membership and piloting a CPD framework.

Emerging priorities: The "New" Agenda

3.12. There was a high degree of convergence of views. Foremost amongst the cited priorities were:

- **helping institutions, departments and individuals understand and respond to the quality enhancement implications of widening participation**
- **developing effective pedagogical and curricular approaches which will improve student retention, enhance employability and demonstrate explicit standards of achievement**
- **addressing the needs of lifelong learning and work based learning**
- **assisting staff and institutions develop materials and practice for, and evaluation of, e-learning, in a variety of formats and modes**

- aiding the adoption of different approaches to learning and their adaption to specific settings, both disciplinary and institutional
- enabling more coherent, accredited and continuing provision for staff development
- sharing experiences of involving students in curriculum design and of making effective use of the views of students in quality enhancement
- raising the profile of learning and teaching
- promoting innovation.

What improvements could be made

3.13. *A frequently mentioned issue was the considerable demands upon staff and the need to ensure that well-intentioned initiatives and activities are manageable, accessible, relevant, of high-quality and prioritised.* The latter entails explicit alignment of different perspectives and agendas. This is being progressed in institutions through Learning and Teaching or Quality Enhancement Strategies.

3.14. The prevailing opinion is that *quality enhancement should be owned by the institutions, with the agencies providing support through focusing upon activities which are best done collectively for the sector,* e.g.:

- accreditation,
- training of subject reviewers,
- benchmarking,
- briefings,
- dissemination,
- brokering,
- and inter-institutional, and inter-sectoral/system sharing of experiences via various routes and constituencies including national subject associations and the associated promotion of reflection to inform enhancement and development.

3.15. Recurrent messages were:

(a) *there is an urgent need for the agencies to be seen to collaborate and to communicate more effectively.* There were also calls for greater proactivity and strengthened dialogue with the intended primary users. In addition to regular inter-agency meetings some respondents identified a continuing role for the TQEC as an overarching committee with responsibility for co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation, and to ensure value for money.

(b) *There was a widespread support for a single portal on quality enhancement for learning, teaching and assessment* and for free and easy access to information and materials.

(c) *Most respondents sought clarification, and possible realignment, of the respective roles of ILT and LTSN, particularly in relation to the functions of the Generic Centre.* Many respondents believed that there was some unhelpful overlap between ILT and LTSN. Open access to LTSN was viewed positively and any adjustment would need to protect that strength.

18

3.16. *Most focus groups favoured detailed consideration of a more substantial restructuring either into a single agency for quality enhancement, alongside one for quality assurance (QAA) or a regrouping into three agencies, e.g. for quality assurance, for quality enhancement, and for staff development.*

3.17. Other specific suggestions included *HEFCE sub-contracting oversight of specific quality enhancement initiatives to the relevant agency*, e.g. HR to HESDA. Such proposals touch upon an important additional dimension, namely that *quality enhancement for learning, teaching and assessment sits within a broader matrix of enhancement and framework for quality*, embracing matters such as infrastructure, research and scholarship, knowledge production, management and leadership. Different stakeholders have different perspectives of that complex set of relationships. For the purposes of these discussions the dominant perspective is taken to be that of the enhancement of the quality of the student experience, i.e. of the quality of student learning and achievement. If a staff focus was adopted, greater attention would need to be paid to the research findings of Henkel (2000) on academic identities, of Becher and Trowler (2001) on the continuing, though changing influence of academic tribes and territories, and of Gibbons et al (1994) on the implications of shifts in the production of knowledge. Such a broader staff-focused stance would also embrace research training and management and leadership development, covering all aspects of academic practice. *We need to ensure that all perspectives are taken into account including the needs of staff, students and employers.*

3.18. Summary of User Views

- Remove overlap, duplication and confusion
- provide greater co-ordination and promote inter-agency collaboration
- maintain a continuing oversight of quality enhancement
- restrict the role of the QAA to quality monitoring/assurance
- create a single quality enhancement portal
- consider the creation of a single quality enhancement agency and/or the realignment of roles and boundaries of the existing agencies and a reduction in the number of agencies
- ensure ease of access, increase effectiveness and demonstrate greater value-for-money.

3.19. As already noted, further work is needed to widen the scope of users consulted.

Related information and evaluations

3.20. The LTSN Generic Centre supplied a draft summary of three institutional self-studies of connecting institutional quality enhancement to the enhancement work of national bodies. The key points were:

- knowledge of QAA, ILT and LTSN appeared to be higher than of HESDA and the TQEF NCT _____
- there was a sense that it would be timely to put more emphasis on enhancement-led development. There appeared to be a relationship

between systematic institutional engagement in quality enhancement and positive, active connection to national bodies.

- there is a need to clarify the functional roles of national bodies, improve communication and address the difference in remit of apparently similar bodies such as ILT, SEDA and LTSN
- the QAA had the highest profile, and institutional arrangements for interactions are well-established
- staff awareness of ILT was high, although some disillusionment was reported
- other than those actively involved in the central provision of staff development few knew of the roles of HESDA
- there was a sense that LTSN was beginning to make an impact. The main reasons for not engaging with the LTSN were lack of time and lack of knowledge
- the institutions lack information on interactions with the national bodies and felt they could do more to benefit from the available resources and support.

3.21. The LTSN kindly supplied a draft copy of the two June 2002 reports from its external evaluators looking at the programme as a whole, and at the LTSN Generic Centre. The key findings indicate:

- The report shows a high level of awareness and interaction with the LTSN at a departmental level. Support for the concept of the LTSN is high although there is a recognition that it is too early to make any fair assessment of change.
- Amongst the Heads of Departments and course leaders surveyed 86% had heard of the LTSN; 80% knew of their subject centre; half felt their subject centre had already contributed positively to the department, with 20% rating the contribution as important or very important.
- Over two thirds of Heads of Departments / course leaders felt the LTSN had the potential to really impact on learning and teaching but half felt it was too early to make reasonable judgements about impact.
- Heads of educational development units showed 100% awareness of the LTSN with half stating that it had already been useful. A further third felt it had the potential to be useful but again there was the sense that it is early days.
- PVCs felt that the LTSN was worthwhile and one noted "if LTSN stopped, something like it would have to be invented". The survey noted that LTSN contact with PVCs has been less systematic than with other central staff (such as educational developers). Since the survey the Generic Centre has been working to support PVCs who had not had any contact with the Generic Centre at the time of the survey.
- Subject centres are working within the context of often significantly different discipline histories and attitudes in terms of learning and teaching development, and are using a range of approaches and operational models. Whilst there is sharing of practices amongst the subject centres there is no single model of operation.
- There are some tensions within the network which is to be expected with a new and rapidly changing organisation.
- The report concluded that LTSN is "an active and dynamic network which has won allies and is recognised and supported within the UK HE community" and that "there is real support among academics for what

20

LTSN is doing, that is has had some effects on learning and teaching practices, and that more is expected over time".

3.22. In HEFCE 02/24 (TQEF) the five key purposes of the HEFCE learning and teaching strategy are stated to be:

- Encouragement and reward to increase the status of learning and teaching, reward high quality, and help those with potential to achieve high quality
- Disseminating and embedding good practice.
- Co-ordination and collaboration.
- Research and innovation
- building capacity for change.

3.23. The Council's strategy is delivered through the 3 strands of the TQEF – institutional, subject and individual. HEFCE expects to allocate £31M in 2002/03, £30M in 2003/04 and £31M in 2004/05 through the TQEF. In 2002/03 it is expected that £16M will be devoted to the institutional strand, £6.5M to subject-based LTSN, £1M to the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme and approximately £600,000 to co-ordination and evaluation of TQEF. £4M will be spent on ongoing FDTL and TLTP projects and £3M on the innovation and enhancement projects associated with phases 4 and 5 of FDTL. Over the next 3 years it is expected that £92M will be spent on TQEF, of which £50M will be distributed to institutions to implement their learning and teaching strategies. Different policies operate in Scotland and Wales, but both Councils actively encourage quality enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment and related innovation and evaluation. The universities in Northern Ireland benefit from the various strands of TQEF. (Fuller details are given in HEFCE 02/24).

3.24. The LTSN is expected to play a significant role in supporting the transfer and embedding of good practice.

3.25. A number of documents have noted the proliferation of sources of support for quality enhancement, observing that it could be confusing for users and possibly inefficient or duplicative.

3.26. Another mapping, with a longer timespan, is afforded by a review of the evaluation reports of recent major funding initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of learning and teaching which Jackson and Phillips (2002) undertook for the LTSN Generic Centre in conjunction with the Educational Developers' Needs Analysis (EDNA) Project.

3.27. Additional insights are offered by:

- Healey and Jenkins (in press), who advocate discipline-based educational development in a chapter in the forthcoming volume on *The Scholarship of Academic Development*, edited by MacDonald and Eggins
- Gordon (2002) who explored learning from quality assessment in a chapter in *The Effective Academic*, edited by Ketteridge, Marshall and Fry
- The analysis by Professor Graham Gibbs for HEFCE of institutional learning and teaching strategies (HEFCE 01/37).

- Middlehurst, R. (1997) Enhancing Quality in F. Coffield and B Williamson (eds) *Repositioning Higher Education.* Buckingham, Open University Press/SRHE.

A Matrix of User Needs

3.28. The matrix of user needs (attached as Annex B) adopts the three strands from the HEFCE TQEF strategy (institutional, subject and individual) and adds sections on policy drivers and activities. The framework is indicative and represents work in progress. It would benefit from further articulation and development which will be done in the second phase of work, but it does afford an initial opportunity to map the contributions of various players and identify possible overlaps, duplications and gaps.

3.29. Matrices are not particularly well-suited to depicting complex nuanced situations which, at least in part, may be represented by the current provision for quality enhancement for learning, teaching and assessment.

3.30. Caution should be taken with interpreting the matrix. The information has been distilled primarily from the focus groups, tempered by responses from the agencies. A multiplicity of ticks does not inevitably represent overlap but a paucity may more reliably point to a gap.

3.31. It can be difficult to fully reconcile the views of providers and users because of differing primary perspectives and knowledge fields. Notwithstanding the inherent difficulties, the Committee believes that it may be timely to pay even greater attention to the identification of user needs and priorities and effective ways of meeting them.

3.32. Whilst the QAA features prominently in the matrix the overwhelming view both from the focus groups and the LTSN evaluation is that QAA is perceived as primarily discharging an assurance role. Provided that is retained as the focus then any overlaps should be minimal.

3.33. Key points from the Matrix

(a) If anything the matrix may under-represent the complexity of the current position.

(b) Apart from the initiatives of the funding bodies there would appear to be significant gaps in external support for institutional needs. That said, support for key supporters such as educational developers comes from various sources including SEDA, Heads of Educational Development Group (HEDG), Association of Learning Technologies (ALT), and the academic literature.

There appears to be a significant gap in research, which may be addressed by ESRC TLRP Phase III projects. Another area where there are probably significant gaps surrounds discipline-based needs. Here much depends upon the level of proactivity within each subject association or PSB. The FDTL programme within the subject strand of the work of the HEFCE/DEL TQEF is another source of support, albeit of variable impact, partly because not all disciplines have yet

22

participated either actively or proportionately in the Fund for the Development for Teaching and Learning (FDTL) programme.

(c)   There is a need for the co-ordination of educationally-based research.

(d)   *The main areas of potential overlap are:*

(i)   a perceived overlap between the accreditation activities of ILT and SEDA

(ii)   the numerous sources of production of resources (e.g. ILT, LTSN, SEDA, ALT, Funding Bodies) and of organising events. Whilst some overlap and duplication may be unavoidable, and even desirable, the principal user needs appear to be for high-quality materials and events rather than multiple opportunities.

(iii) some of the activities of ILT and the LTSN Generic Centre. The fact that one (ILT) serves a restricted audience complicates the issue.

(e)   The agencies generally have several key functions, thereby legitimising significant potential for overlap. In some instances, such as ILT and HESDA, a specific collaborative agreement has been formulated in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. However, such commendable agreements do not appear to be widely known or understood by users.

(f)   There is potential overlap in the area of scholarship and publication but that is not necessarily perceived as problematic, since it can be argued that there is a great deal of work which needs to be done in this area.

(g)   Users would welcome good search engines in order to access the growing "grey literature" on quality enhancement in learning and teaching such as pedagogical resources and materials, "unpublished" project reports and small-scale studies. We could consider the extent to which we could use the Higher Education and Research Opportunities (HERO) website to co-ordinate and disseminate centrally.

3.34. As already noted, the matrix can be developed. It could, for example, include sections on student, agency, and employer needs and views as well as those included in the left hand column at present.

Supporting data

3.35. One institution in the LTSN Generic Centre survey of institutional self-studies of connecting quality enhancement to the enhancement work of national bodies, outlined staff relationships in a matrix which is reproduced in Table 2.

3.36. The patterns largely reinforce those from the TQEC focus groups, when allowance is made for the distinctive influence of institutional mission and tradition. Again QAA dominates engagements, with HESDA featuring least prominently in the context of the QE of learning and teaching.

The agencies: funding and business model

3.37. In business terms, we could summarise the strategic positioning and current financing and business issues of the agencies as follows.

HESDA

3.38. HESDA is run as a not-for-profit business whose main focus is to support the sector. It has a stable corporate membership which includes a high proportion of HEIs (about 140 with over 90% of the workforce). It delivers a range of training and development activities which include the top management programme. The market for this activity is stable or growing and the business model adopted by HESDA of location in a (subsidised) university accommodation, a small core staff plus freelance consultants is a sensible and low-risk one.

3.39. There is more training business than HESDA can handle. This is a growing and competitive market. HESDA can undoubtedly continue to capture a share of this, but its role is not an exclusive or necessarily competitive one. It can also act as a broker to influence institutions and others. Its aim is that programmes of development are effective, not necessarily to deliver them itself. It also has significant business in standards and other contract work for government departments and other agencies and a role as a National training Organisation (NTO), and possible prospective role within a Sector Skills Council.

3.40. HESDA's current income is approximately £1.3m per year broadly made up from three main income streams: institutional subscriptions, delivery of training, and government contracts. HESDA is financially stable and sustainable. It has significant reserves which it has prudently created to permit an orderly run-down without costs to its members should this ever prove to be necessary.

3.41. In terms of future business development, there is no financial pressure to change the current model. However, the Chief Executive is seeking to review its strategy and focus its efforts.

LTSN

3.42. LTSN is not a business. It is a large project, that is run on business-like principles. LTSN has a federal structure with a head office (Programme Executive) and Generic Centre in York and 24 subject centres located in institutions. The business model for subject centres varies, but each submits strategic and operational plans to the programme executive for approval. The main role of LTSN is to provide a framework of support for practitioners and departments at the subject level.

3.43. The four funding bodies have committed £8m per annum over 5 years from 1999, much of which is paid to institutions to fund projects and subject centres.

3.44. LTSN is accountable for much greater sums of money than ILT or HESDA, and has some 300 staff (c.125 FTE) working on its programmes. It is

24

technically a part of ILT which acts as employer and host organisation for LTSN, but does not direct its work.

3.45. LTSN's business imperative is to deliver effective outcomes and value for money for its funding. An important principle, which leads to some potential conflict with the aims of the ILT, is that its materials are freely available to all staff in HE.

3.46. Unlike HESDA and ILT, LTSN is less directly subject to market pressures, but as with all such programmes in HE, it has to continue to command the confidence of institutions to justify its top-sliced funding.

ILT

3.47. The business model for ILT is not dissimilar to that for other professional membership organisations. It has relatively significant fixed costs and its main source of income is a large number of relatively modest annual fees paid by members. Its financial viability is therefore largely determined by the size of its membership base, and the level of its fees. Currently, it has something like 10% of the profession (12,000 members).

3.48. The concept of a professional body for HE teachers was recommended by Dearing. Unlike professional bodies in other areas, there is no "licence to practise" in HE and so the rate and extent of uptake of membership of ILT was always going to depend on the perceived status and cachet of the new body. Dearing recommended that "over the medium-term, it should become the normal requirement that all new full time academic staff with teaching responsibilities are required to achieve at least associate membership of the ILT, for the successful completion of probation". This was a strong message about the way the sector should regard ILT.

3.49. ILT offers exclusive services to its members. There is a significant cost to providing these. Also, some respondents perceived competition with the activities of LTSN.

3.50. Other professional bodies attach a high importance to their role in terms of strategy, development of the profession, lobbying with government etc. This is normally perceived by their members to provide a value-added service for their subscriptions.

3.51. It is arguable that:

a) ILT has done well to capture 10% of the potential HE membership starting from zero. Many institutions do support ILT in various ways, e.g. paying the first year costs of membership of individual academic staff;

b) notwithstanding these positive achievements, some respondents believed that the ILT has not yet achieved the strategic profile or acceptance at a strategic (i.e. senior management) level in the sector that Dearing envisaged. A shift in perception at institutional level may be indicated by the 121 HEIs which have had their programmes accredited by ILT.

Financing and business aspects of ILT

3.52. The initial business plan prepared by consultants for the ILT has proven to be financially unrealistic, as the ILT recognises. Growth membership is

ahead of planned recruitment but on the current model it is likely to take some time before the ILT becomes self-financing.

3.53. ILT has a business development plan which indicates that, with further investment, it could reach a break-even position in about Year 7 (2005/06).

3.54. The opportunities to develop ILT's business and to make it more financially secure depend essentially on increasing its membership. There are several dimensions to this. Within ILT, there may be opportunities to make services to members more attractive or to deliver its work in a more cost effective manner; and there is a pricing and marketing dimension.

3.55. Equally important to all of these, ILT could be helped if other organisations chose to exert leverage on its behalf. For example, the funding bodies could let it be known that they regarded it as an element of good practice in HR or L&T strategy that membership of an appropriate professional body was recognised by institutions in pay and promotions. Even more powerfully perhaps, QAA could include a proportion of staff in membership of a recognised and appropriate professional body amongst the criteria they review.

3.56. Even without such external leverage, more institutions could themselves decide to recognise ILT membership in their procedures for academic recognition and reward.

3.57. Such suggestions of course presuppose that visible recognition of professional attributes of teaching and supporting student learning is important to QE. While this is increasingly the accepted norm in other professional sectors, the HE sector has not made this policy assumption in relation specifically to learning and teaching. The arguments are complex and it could certainly be argued that HE teaching and supporting student learning may not "be a profession". Many academics or academic related staff would regard themselves as an engineer, a doctor, a librarian, or a researcher first and their primary professional allegiance would be to the relevant professional body for their discipline. Nonetheless the fact that the ILT has attracted 12,000 members indicates a different perspective.

3.58. The Committee intends to discuss these issues further and these issues are linked to the possible scenario that the sector could take a more explicit stance of principle about developing and recognising the professionalism of its teachers and all those who support directly student learning.

3.59. Whatever the academic policy arguments here, the business position of the ILT, under its current model, could be said to be a direct result of this ambivalence both by institutions and by individuals.

Initial comments on the current arrangements

3.60. The Committee acknowledges the valuable work of the different agencies in supporting specific aspects and strands of quality enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment.

3.61. Their efforts should be seen in the context that it is institutions which have the primary management responsibility for implementing quality enhancement through their strategic plans. The role of the agencies is to support and facilitate.

3.62. Institutions have made significant progress in developing strategies,

supported by the funding bodies.

3.63. The initial research undertaken by the Committee suggests that:

- some significant gaps may exist

- there appear to be overlaps which merit further investigation.

3.64. These findings may indicate that improvements can be made and that will be part of the next phase of work undertaken by the Committee.

3.65. The Committee believes that short-term financial considerations should not be a main driver of any change. It favours a measured, medium-term approach which emphasises user perspectives.

4. SEEKING SOLUTIONS

Introduction

4.1. The Committee believe it is important that the issues raised in chapter 3 are not seen as a criticism of the staff of the agencies, or of the way the agencies are currently working. They are each working to their own agenda and priorities as determined by their different roles and management arrangements.

4.2. It is worth noting that three of the agencies (QAA, ILT, LTSN) have all been formed relatively recently and after extensive discussion and consultation in the sector.

4.3. It is also an important part of the context to note that QE is not primarily the province and responsibility of the agencies. Indeed, their role is to support institutions, individuals, and discipline groups who all have a role and a responsibility in this as well. Some of the problems identified in the focus groups reflect a lack of clear strategy (and even current awareness) in institutions and amongst senior staff in higher education. The agencies may be able to address this, and need to do so, but it should not automatically be seen as "their problem" if senior staff in HE are unable to describe the relative roles of three well-established agencies about which there is an abundance of freely accessible material.

4.4. However, the agencies are playing a full part in the work of the Committee and they have responded positively and constructively to the issues raised in the work summarised in Chapter 3. The remainder of this chapter considers the options that may be appropriate both in the short-term (interim improvements) and in the medium-term (possible structural reforms).

Initial response from the agencies - interim improvements

4.5. The agencies have accepted that there is more to do in terms of informing users about their roles, harmonising their work within their existing plans and priorities, and joint discussion and planning to minimise avoidable duplication, overlaps and discontinuities between their work.

4.6. The three agencies have already committed themselves to working to an interim protocol - a first-stage development to improve the services to users - which was agreed at a meeting of their Chairmen with Professor Sir Ron Cooke on 24th May 2002.

4.7. The interim protocol involves:

- Greater collaboration and co-ordination between the agencies (HESDA/LTSN/ILT) to maximise complementary features and activities.

- Creation of a single prospectus of agencies' roles and support activity, including joint and complementary activity.

- Joint press releases, as appropriate.

- Joint presentations to key audiences.

- Collaboration and co-ordination on communications and dissemination strategies.

- A single hub website.

- Overarching co-ordinating committee for all three agencies, with external representation from UUK SCOP and HEFCE, to achieve the above objectives.

4.8. The Committee agrees that this is a useful interim step forward, and while it does not address many of the concerns identified in Chapter 3, it has the virtue of being capable of being implemented immediately, and with minimal implications for funding.

4.9. However, the Committee is concerned that this preliminary phase of co-ordination and collaboration as proposed by the agencies should provide a role for users or funders at the regular meetings of the agencies. Even though this is only an interim solution, *the Committee would prefer to see these meetings opened up to a slightly wider group*, to ensure that views from outside the 3 agencies can also be represented and taken into account.

4.10. **We recommend that the 3 agencies proceed as an interim measure as proposed, but that they also invite UUK and SCOP each to nominate a representative to attend for part of these meetings in order to provide an external perspective on users needs and views.** These representatives would not of course play a part in any discussions or decisions about the business affairs of the agencies which could be taken in a separate part of the meeting.

4.11. The Committee is also concerned that institutions, sector bodies, and others should take their share of the responsibility for QE alongside the agencies. We will consult on this in the Autumn 2002 and our final report will make further suggestions in this area. However, the Committee suggests that debate should take place in the sector about the key priorities for quality enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment – institutional, subject-based and individual. For example, should the sector adopt a more explicit, proactive and supportive role towards the concept of appropriate professional preparation and continuing development for roles in teaching and learning in HE as recommended by Dearing?

4.12. **We recommend that institutions and the sector bodies consider the appropriateness of the principles set out in paragraphs 4.19 to 4.24, and the mechanisms that institutions and others who support them could adopt to achieve these outcomes.**

Medium-term changes - possible structural models

4.13. The interim improvements recommended above will certainly help to address the issues raised in chapter 3. However, the Committee believes that they will not go far enough.

4.14. For the medium-term, it may be necessary to introduce structural changes to streamline the agencies, to clarify their relative roles, and to reduce competition between them.

29

4.15. We acknowledge that structural change is not automatically the best or only answer to these issues, and any proposed structural change needs to be carefully evaluated in terms of its costs and potential negative impacts as well as potential benefits.

4.16. The agency chairmen themselves have acknowledged the possibility of structural change in their note of the meeting on 24th May 2002.

4.17. This suggested, and the Committee agree, that in principle structural change could encompass a range of options which could include:

- One agency for QA (QAA) and one for QE
- Two QE agencies
- Three QE agencies (as now) but perhaps configured differently.

4.18. A paper circulated by the Chairman at the TQEC meeting on 27 June 2002 builds upon these possibilities to identify 5 different structural Models. The Committee intends to evaluate these during phase 2 of their work.

Evaluation of these models

4.19. The principles of this evaluation will include the following.

4.20. It must involve the views of all key stakeholders:

- individuals
- subject associations
- institutions
- funding and sector bodies
- agencies and their members/users
- students
- PSBs, the NHS etc
- employers and outside stakeholders.

4.21. It must not just be a response to short-term problems. The evaluation must also address the medium-term QE agenda which the Committee is to develop over the Summer/Autumn 2002.

4.22. It must be objective and evidence-based as far as possible.

4.23. The next phase of work will define some evaluation criteria. These are likely to include three main types of test:

- impact
- value for money
- addressing the needs of different users.

4.24. As a first indication, some suggested tests to be applied to each option being evaluated could include:

a) can it contribute to the delivery of the medium-term QE agenda to be defined?

Interim report: September 2002

b) does it help to address the concerns of the user expressed in chapter 3, i.e. by:
   - separating regulation from enhancement, development and support
   - reducing overlaps and confusion over roles
   - providing a clear means to fill gaps in provision.

c) is it financially robust and does it minimise the overall burdens on public funds for HE?

d) does it help institutions to meet their aspirations in QE?

e) would it overall improve the quality regime in higher education?

f) can it be implemented without undue transitional costs or risks to existing support to QE?

Programme of work

4.25. This section will set out a process to achieve this evaluation and to reach conclusions and recommendations for a final report. The key elements in this work programme which can be taken forward over the Summer/Autumn 2002 will include:

a) testing a wider range of user views. Some can be done now, but some (e.g. students) may have to wait until October 2002

b) developing the matrix

c) developing the emerging priorities and related agenda for subsequent discussion by the Committee

d) developing the structural models into a set of properly defined options which can be evaluated

e) developing the evaluation criteria.

4.26. After further meetings in November and December 2002, the Committee will evaluate the structural options and to make recommendations about the way forward. After a final meeting of the TQEC in December the TQEC will deliver its final report by 31 December 2002.

5. INDUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

5.1. The TQEC received a request from HEFCE to add induction and support for external examiners to its deliberation, and it agreed to do so. These are preliminary views which the committee will examine further, especially in the light of comments it receives during the next phase.

5.2. External examiners are appointed by higher education institutions. They are widely recognised to be a crucial part of the existing quality assurance arrangements now agreed for higher education. They have long played an important role in promoting consistent standards and appropriate procedures in the assessment and award of qualifications.

5.3. External examiners are essentially volunteers and undertake this activity as part of their overall commitment to the good standing and functioning of the academy. They undertake this demanding and rewarding responsibility for relatively little remuneration. *Imposing a new bureaucratic layer of compulsory accreditation over the existing role of external examiners risks losing the goodwill and professional expertise of a great many dedicated members of the academy.* It needs to be recognised that paying external examiners the full rate for the work would greatly increase costs – certainly at least fivefold.

5.4. External examiners are appointed by the higher education institutions whose courses they are examining. The TQEC does not think it either desirable or feasible to change the nature of the contractual relationship between HEIs and their examiners.

5.5. External examiners play an important role in the internal quality assurance arrangements of institutions. Since the emerging procedures for quality audit primarily rest upon robust internal arrangements, it can be argued that the role of external examiners will attract greater public attention, largely through the planned publication of relevant information on standards.

5.6. The TQEC believes that the response to the request from HEFCE should be guided by 4 central aims, namely:

- recognition of the responsibility of institutions for the induction and development of examiners (internal and external)

- minimising bureaucracy

- ensuring appropriate institutional induction and support mechanisms are in place, building upon existing good practice

- any accreditation should be voluntary.

5.7. Evidence from continuation audit reports shows that a number of institutions have specific induction programmes for external examiners. Many institutions have handbooks and the practice of briefing new external examiners is commonplace.

5.8. Many programmes have more than one external examiner and institutions exercise care over the timing of rotation of external examiners in order to ensure continuity and the availability of experienced examiners.

5.9. The TQEC recommends that institutions continue to exercise responsibility for ensuring that examiners are supported in carrying out their duties to a consistently high standard. That includes looking at the arrangements for the induction and development of external examiners, and the way in which consistency of good practice is encouraged and recognised.

5.10. Universities UK, QAA and others have already taken various steps towards that end. In particular, the following are in hand or proposed:

(a) The QAA published in January 2000, as part of its code of practice for the assurance of quality and standards in higher education, guidance and principles for the effective use of external examiners. It contains a set of 16 precepts designed to secure good practice.

(b) In undertaking institutional audits on the new method, the QAA reviewers will have in mind the Code of Practice, including the section on external examining, and the expectations about standards set out in the QAA's national qualifications framework. Their conclusions will be set out in a published report on each audit.

(c) The QAA's operational description published in March 2002 makes explicit that audit teams will find it difficult to express a high level of confidence in an institution's ability to secure quality and standards if the institution cannot demonstrate "strong and scrupulous use of fully independent external examiners". That conclusion will be contained in the published reports on relevant audits.

(d) Under the arrangements agreed with HEFCE external examiners will be asked to prepare summaries of their reports for publication. QAA institutional audits will check those summaries are available and reflect the examiners' full reports.

(e) Universities UK, SCOP and QAA are jointly running a series of round table discussions about best practice in external examining. In section 8 of the QAA code, there is already an expectation that HEIs should ensure examiners are properly prepared both in relation to the particular circumstances and methods of the appointing HEI and in relation to external examining in general.

(f) The TQEC recognises that there may be a need at some stage to update the QAA code on external examining. Although it is only two years old, some major recent developments have already taken place – notably QAA's own work on the overall code of practice and the national qualifications framework, and the proposed publication of summaries of external examiners' reports. *Updating the code would*

provide an opportunity to look again at the expectations of best practice, including induction and development.

5.11. The TQEC considers that the present system of external examiners is working well and the above changes will support its development and improvement.

5.12. The TQEC would draw a distinction between accreditation and induction for external examiners. It would support in principle some form of voluntary accreditation by an appropriate body. The external examiner system relies ultimately on the professional expertise and goodwill of staff in higher education. It would not be sensible or productive to upset the balance of this achievement. *The TQEC supports the principle of building on and enhancing existing procedures which have proved thorough, workable and are not over bureaucratic, and it will continue to discuss ways forward in this context at subsequent meetings.*

5.13. Two other areas impinge upon this topic. Firstly there is the matter of the induction and development of external quality auditors. That is addressed by QAA, currently in conjunction with HESDA. Secondly, the emerging arrangements for quality assurance expect the use of external reviewers in departmental/programme reviews. That practice is already commonplace in many institutions. Where that is the case, further development will largely involve reflection on, and dissemination of, good practice. Institutions which do not presently adopt this practice will wish to address the issues of induction and recruitment of external reviewers.

Interim report: September 2002

Annex A to TQEC Interim Report

Aim

To consider the value and relationships of the agencies responsible for promoting the enhancement of teaching and student learning, and to make recommendations to avoid overlap, measure impact and value, and improve relationships.

Terms of reference

1. To identify the needs of UK higher education institutions, individual teachers, and supporters of learning, as they support the enhancement of teaching, student learning and assessment.

2. To describe and evaluate the functions and activities of the main agencies supporting enhancement (HESDA, ILT, LTSN, QAA) and the relevant functions of the funding bodies, higher education institutions and other agencies, in order to identify any overlap, duplication or gaps in provision to meet the needs identified in paragraph 1 above.

3. To reach agreement between the agencies, funding bodies and institutions on the most effective division of labour, which minimises overlap and duplication, maximises complementarity, meets needs identified as priorities, and demonstrates the benefits and costs to all stakeholders. This may be expressed as a memorandum of agreement between the above parties.

4. To identify the conditions necessary, including funding, for the achievement of this division of labour.

5. To look at ways of promoting better induction for, and support of, external examiners.

6. To report to the representative bodies, the funding bodies and the agencies with an interim report by 31 July 2002, and a final report by 31 December 2002.

Membership of the Committee

Chairman: Professor Sir Ron Cooke, Vice-Chancellor, University of York
Professor Madeleine Atkins, Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of Newcastle-upon Tyne
Mr Bahram Bekhradnia, Director of Policy, HEFCE
Professor Bob Burgess, Vice-Chancellor, University of Leicester
Dr Roger Brown, Principal, Southampton Institute
Ms Sandra Burslem, Vice-Chancellor, the Manchester Metropolitan University
Professor Sir Kenneth Calman, Vice-Chancellor and Warden, University of Durham; Chairman of the ILT
Sir Anthony Cleaver, Chairman, eUniversities Worldwide Ltd
Dr Geoffrey Copland, Vice-Chancellor and Rector, the University of Westminster
Mr Christopher Kenyon, Chairman, William Kenyon & Sons Ltd; Chairman of the QAA
Professor David Rhind, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, City University; Chairman of HESDA

Professor William Stevely, Principal of Robert Gordon University
Professor Richard Trainor, Vice-Chancellor, University of Greenwich; Chairman of the LTSN
Professor Mike Scott, Principal and Chief Executive, North East Wales Institute of Higher Education.

Observers

Professor Phil Gummett, HEFCW
Mr Laurence Howells, SHEFC
Ms Jane Tory DfES.

Secretariat

Mr David Caldwell/Mr Gerard Madill Universities Scotland
Mr Gareth Lewis HEW
Mr William Locke UUK
Mr Gerry Taggart HEFCE
Mr Greg Wade SCOP
Dr Sheila Watt HEFCE
Mr David Young UUK.

Consultants

Professor George Gordon
Dr Jim Port.

36

Annex B – Matrix

Table 1- Matrix of Needs, Drivers and Activities in relation to Quality Enhancement of Learning and Teaching

AGENCIES	ILT	QAA	HESDA	LTSN	OTHERS	NOTES
USERS IN HE						
1. Individuals (staff)						
• Enrolling students		✓		✓	✓	
• Managing courses	✓	✓		✓	✓	PSBs, SEDA
- Formulation	✓	✓		✓	✓	
- Preparation	✓	✓		✓	✓	
- Delivery	✓	✓		✓	✓	
- Assessment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Skills needs						
• Professional practice	✓	✓	✓		✓	
• C&IT	✓		✓		✓	JISC, ALT
• Interface with students	✓			✓	✓	AMOSSHE, HEDG, SEDA
Employability						
• CPD	✓	✓			✓	
2. Institutions						
• Enrolling students g	✓	✓			✓	Funding Councils, UUK/SCOP
• Managing courses g	✓	✓				Funding Councils, PSBs
- Formulation g		✓				
- Preparation g		✓				
- Delivery g		✓				
- Assessment g		✓			✓	
Skills needs						

• Professional practice	✓	✓	✓		✓	SEDA
• C&IT		✓	✓		✓	ALT, JISC
• Interface with students		✓	✓		✓	Funding Councils, DfES
Employability						
• CPD	✓	✓	✓			Funding Councils
3. Disciplines						
• Enrolling students		✓		✓		
• Managing courses		✓		✓	✓	PSBs, Subject Associations, Funding Councils
- Formulation		✓		✓	✓	
- Preparation		✓		✓	✓	
- Delivery		✓		✓	✓	
- Assessment		✓		✓	✓	
Skills needs						
• Professional practice		✓		✓	✓	PSBs
• C&IT		✓		✓	✓	ALT, JISC
• Interface with students		✓		✓	✓	
Employability						
• CPD					✓	UUK, Funding Councils
4. Policy Drivers						
• Assessment of performance		✓	✓		✓	Govt, Funding Councils, UUK/SCOP
• Co-ordination				✓	✓	Govt, Funding Councils, UUK/SCOP
• Networking	✓			✓	✓	Govt, Funding Councils, UUK/SCOP
• Rewarding high quality		✓			✓	Govt, Funding Councils, UUK/SCOP
5. Activities						
• Resources o	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	SEDA, SRHE, Funding Councils, JISC, ALT
• Events o	✓		✓	✓	✓	SEDA, SRHE, UUK, JISC, ALT, Funding Councils

• Accreditation	o	✓				✓	SEDA
• Briefings		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	UUK, JISC, Funding Councils
• Projects	o			✓	✓	✓	HEFCE, DfES
• Research	g					✓	SRHE, ESRC TLRP
• Scholarship		✓			✓	✓	SEDA, SRHE

Key

g gaps
o overlaps

Table 2

	QAA	LTSN	NCT	ILT	HESDA
Reference to Nat. Bodies in HEI strategies					
Teaching and learning	*	*		*	
Human Resources				*	
Widening Participation	*				
Quality enhancement	*	*		*	
Reference to National Bodies in HEI policies					
Programme review and validation	*				
Annual review					
Review of subject	*	*			
External examiners					
Use of QAA policies like programme specification, subject benchmarking or codes of practice	*				
Where matters relating to Nat. Bodies would be considered in HEI committees eg					
Academic Standards Committee (Academic Board & sub committees)	*	*		*	
Teaching and Learning Committee (School Directors of Learning & Teaching)	*	*			
Teaching Forum	*	*			
School Boards	*	*		*	
Departmental meetings	*	*		*	
Use of information to support HEI development activities and processes					
Cross-institutional task groups	*	*			
School, department task groups	*				
Staff development activities	*	*		*	*
Development programmes for new teachers	*	*		*	
Department-based staff development	*				
NB inputs to institutional conferences and other events	?				*

HEI involvement in National Body activities		LTSN	NCT	ILT	HESDA
Public debates eg enhancement/consultations	*	*	*		
Participation in conferences, seminars and workshops	*		*		
Network activities eg discussion for information gathering and dissemination	*				
Advisory and steering groups	*	*			
Research-based activities eg production of case studies				*	
Production of commissioned materials case studies for web sites or publication.			*		
Involvement in benchmarking or other collaborative trans institutional processes	*				
Staff contributions to Nat Body events		*			
Staff contributions to Nat. Body activities	*	*			*
FDTL and other bidding processes		*			
Projects where HEIs, departments are brought together	*				

Source: LTSN Generic Study

TQEC interim report

Acronyms

ALT – Association of Learning Technologies
AMOSSHE – Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education
CPD – Continuing Professional Development
C&IT – Communications and Information Technology
DEL – Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland)
DfES – Department for Education and Skills
EDNA – Educational Developers' Needs Analysis Project
ESRC – Economic and Social Research Council
FECs – Further Education Colleges
FDTL – Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning
GC – Generic Centre
HE – Higher Education
HEDG – Heads of Educational Development Group
HEFCE – Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEIs – Higher Education Institutions
HERO – Higher Education and Research Opportunities
HESDA – Higher Education Staff Development Agency (formerly UCoSDA)
HEQC – Higher Education Quality Council
HEFCW – Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HR – Human Resources
HRD – Human Resource Development
ICT – Information and Communications Technology
IS – Information Systems
IT – Information Technology
JISC – Joint Information Systems Committee
ILT – Institute for Learning and Teaching
L&T - Learning and Teaching
LTSN – Learning and Teaching Support Network
MTQEA – Medium-term Quality Enhancement Agenda
NCT – National Co-ordination Team
NTO – National Training Organisation
PSB – Professional and Statutory Bodies
PVCs – Pro-Vice-Chancellors
QA – Quality Assurance
QE – Quality Enhancement
QAA – The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
SCOP – Standing Conference of Principals
SHEFC – Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
SEDA – Staff and Educational Development Association
SRHE – Society for Research into Higher Education
TQEC – Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee
TQEF – Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund
TLRP – Teaching and Learning Research Programme
UCoSDA – Universities and Colleges Staff Development Agency
UK – United Kingdom
UUK – Universities UK