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Dear Mr Sharp

**Mid-cycle follow up to Institutional audit – final report**

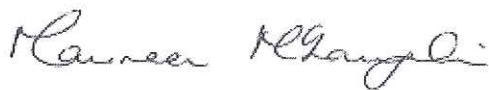
I am enclosing the final report on the mid-cycle follow up to your audit. Your comments on the draft report have been incorporated into this final version.

As the mid cycle follow up is not a peer review process, the report cannot result in a recommendation or a decision, but it will be used as part of the evidence base for your next institutional review.

This final version of the report has also been sent to HEFCE, but as stated in the Handbook for institutional audit, will not be published.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for input to this process.

With best wishes



**Maureen McLaughlin**  
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**Quality Assurance Agency for Higher  
Education  
Institutional audit England and Northern Ireland**

**University of East Anglia**

**Mid-cycle follow-up of the Institutional audit, March 2009**

**May 2012**

**Section 1: Introduction**

1 The mid-cycle follow-up is an integral part of the overall Institutional audit process and supports the same aims. It serves as a short health check, for the institution and for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), on the institution's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous Institutional audit and includes, where relevant, collaborative provision, even where this has been the subject of a supplementary collaborative provision audit. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the institution of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next Institutional audit.

2 The last Institutional audit of the University of East Anglia (the University) took place in March 2009. This resulted in a judgement of **confidence** in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and the academic standards of its awards.

3 The audit identified the following features of good practice:

- the University's systematic approach to plagiarism and the work of the school plagiarism officers, which together provide comprehensive institutional regulations and guidance
- the specification and application of the framework for student involvement in quality assurance throughout the University, which afford significant opportunities for students to express their views to the University
- the integrated approach, led by the Information Services Directorate, to the management and development of its library and information technology provision, which contributes to the quality of learning opportunities
- the strategic management of student support services by the Dean of Students' Office, which promotes the provision of comprehensive and coordinated support to students
- the arrangements for the operation of collaboration provision, particularly the work of the central Partnerships Office, which support the sound management of academic standards and the enhancement of quality in the partner institutions

- the provision, through the Transitions initiative, of an extensive and student-focused training programme for postgraduate research students, which develops a range of skills directly relevant to the students' programmes of study and also prepares them for employment.

4 The audit report also made some recommendations for consideration by the institution, which are the subject of Section 2 of this report.

5 For the purpose of the mid-cycle follow-up, the institution prepared a briefing paper which was supported by existing institutional documentation. The institution has indicated that the Union of University of East Anglia Students was involved in the preparation of the briefing paper. The students' union also provided a helpful commentary on the briefing paper, which was forwarded to QAA.

## **Section 2: Recommendations of the previous audit**

6 The Institutional audit led to a number of recommendations; these are set out below, together with a summary of the action taken by the University to address them.

### **Advisable**

- Specify the limits of acceptable variability in practice at school level, with particular reference to nomenclature for key committees and to roles and responsibilities for the provision and accuracy of information for students, including the content of handbooks.
- Further to the advice provided in the QAA Institutional audit report of 2004, give priority to the systematic calibration of the University's provision against the guidance provided by *the Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) on the matter of levels.

7 The Learning Teaching and Quality Office produced a report on the issue of levels within the common course structure in December 2010, and this contributed to the development of the New Academic Model (NAM) for implementation in September 2013. The NAM will ensure a clear progression between levels by restricting and specifying the number of modules which can be taken at various levels in each of the three years of an undergraduate degree.

- Assure itself that the application in practice of policy and procedures for extensions to submission deadlines and for extenuating circumstances does not result in inequitable treatment of students.

8 Following the Institutional audit, schools were asked to audit their practice and a report was received by the Learning and Teaching Committee in May 2010; new university-wide guidance has now been provided, revised in December 2010 and updated in August 2011. More complex cases are considered by named role holders, which reduces the potential for undue variation. In addition, LYTS hub managers review all extensions for their hub to ensure consistency of practice and equitable treatment.

- Revise the guidance for the conduct of assessment boards to establish and secure institution-wide specifications for minimum attendance and quoracy.
- 9 The University reported on measures taken to implement this recommendation.
- Review the policies, procedures and published information relating to the admission of postgraduate research students, to establish clarity of requirement.
- 10 A unified hub to support all postgraduate research (PGR) provision was established in August 2011 and the University believes that this is facilitating consistency of approach. A new system for managing postgraduate (including PGR) admissions is being implemented.
- 11 Overall, the University has developed a Blackboard-based Central Student Handbook which provides standard university-wide information; from 2013 a single online student handbook will incorporate university, faculty, school and course-level information.

## **Desirable**

- Formalise the expectations for the training and ongoing support for postgraduate research students who teach, to ensure they are adequately prepared for the role.
- 12 The University referred to guidelines which assume that PGR students who teach will have undertaken training provided by the University or can demonstrate evidence of equivalent training. The University now offers three routes to preparation for teaching and it has instituted a system to review take-up of teaching skills training by PGRs who hold Associate Tutor (AT) status; while not all ATs follow the training which is provided, it has been assumed that the remainder have prior teaching qualifications or are academic staff, but this will now be monitored.
- Re-appraise the current approach to peer observation of teaching, to establish consistent practice across the University.
- 13 A new Code of Practice was endorsed by Senate in February 2011 and a briefing for all staff provided in October 2011. An amendment was introduced in February 2012 which specified in greater detail the role of School Teaching Directors and the Head of School with regard to the performance management of staff in cases where concerns emerge from an observation.

## **Other recommendations and developments**

- 14 The University reported on significant developments since the last Institutional audit, including the establishment and continuing development of a Centre for Contemporary Agriculture, a joint provision between the University and Easton College, programmes in the field of Energy Engineering, continued discussions around the future development of University Campus Suffolk, and development of provision at the University's centre in London.

## **Section 3: Internal review reports**

15 The University's periodic review process is conducted at discipline level and operates on a five-yearly cycle. Its primary purpose is to reflect on curriculum design, teaching and assessment, and to review taught provision to inform strategic planning.

16 The University provided a list of the periodic reviews that had been carried out since the last audit, together with a record of their consideration by faculty panels that produce action plans to inform quality assurance and enhancement, and share good practice.

17 The review process demonstrates externality through explicit use of QAA's Academic Infrastructure and frameworks developed by other relevant bodies, and through responsiveness to points raised by external examiners. Each review panel includes at least one external adviser.

18 The institution indicated that there was student involvement in the periodic review process through membership of the review panel and meetings with representative groups of students.

19 In summary, the information on periodic review provided useful insight into the University's approach to internal review and how it conducts its own health check of the management of academic quality and standards at discipline level.

## **Section 4: Matters for the next Institutional Review**

20 The effectiveness of any new arrangements introduced by the University in addressing the findings of the previous audits will be explored as a matter of course in the next Institutional Review. The following issues, which require further attention at this stage, have the potential to be of particular interest:

- the New Academic Model
- peer observation
- developments at University Campus Suffolk.

## **Section 5: Conclusion**

21 QAA is able to confirm that the University of East Anglia provided the requisite documentation for this mid-cycle follow-up. From QAA's analysis of the documentation, the University appears to have made good progress in addressing the recommendations of the Institutional audit, March 2009. QAA has identified a number of matters, set out in detail in Section 4 above, that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next Institutional Review.

Tony Platt, Assistant Director, Reviews Group  
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May 2012

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