- understanding of the overall aims and intended learning outcomes;

- responses to the teaching;

- learning experiences;

- views on academic support and the resources available;

- feedback and representation arrangements.

The facilitator does not attend these meetings but may be consulted about the issues raised by the students. Arrangements for meetings with students are set out in Annex J. The reviewers may also seek the views of former students, their employers, and representatives from relevant industries or professions.

73. All reviewers are expected to identify, share, consider and evaluate evidence related to the programmes under scrutiny. Reviewers should keep notes of all meetings with staff and students, of their observations, and of comments on the quality of students' work and its assessment. Notes should be analytical rather than merely descriptive, and should refer to sources of information as well as to direct observations. Strengths and weaknesses should be summarised. Circulation of notes within the review team, and collation by the review coordinator, will assist in developing a collective evidence base on which judgements can be made.

74. Team meetings are used to review the evidence gathered, form preliminary judgements, and determine which issues require further exploration. Reviewers are expected to evaluate how the evidence gathered compares with the self-evaluation prepared by the subject provider and to test the strength of the evidence adduced to support the judgements. Discussion of the emerging judgements must involve the whole review team.

**Making judgements**
**Evidence**

75. The subject review *aide-mémoire* at Annex E provides guidance on the questions likely to lead to the evidence necessary to make judgements about academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.

76. The collective judgements of the review team should be informed by the totality of evidence accumulated. Accordingly, all team members are expected to share information they have gathered which appears relevant to any matter on which judgement is to be made.

77. Judgements about academic standards will be made on the appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes set by the subject provider in relation to subject benchmark statements, qualification levels and the overall aims of the provision; on the effectiveness of curricular content and assessment arrangements in relation to the intended learning outcomes; and on actual student achievement.

78. Judgements about the quality of learning opportunities will be made on the effectiveness of teaching and the learning opportunities provided; on the effectiveness of the use of learning resources (including human resources); and on the effectiveness of the support provided to students to enable them to progress within the programme.

79. Reviewers will seek to establish that:

- intended learning outcomes are clearly expressed, and reflect appropriately relevant subject benchmark statements and the overall aims of the programme;

- curricular content supports the intended outcomes, and that assessments measure appropriately their achievement;

- there is effective communication to staff (including placement staff) and students, so that learners and teachers know what is expected of them.

- There is effective partnership working with workforce development confederations, professional statutory and regulatory bodies and placement providers.

80.  Reviewers will seek to establish, by reference to subject benchmark statements where appropriate, that the design of the curriculum facilitates:

- acquisition of knowledge and understanding;

- acquisition of cognitive skills;

- acquisition of subject-specific skills, including practical and professional skills;

- acquisition of transferable skills;

- progression to employment and/or further study.

- The preparation of students for professional practice.

## Judgements on academic standards

81.  A single, threshold judgement is made about academic standards. Having regard to all the matters listed below, reviewers will decide whether they have confidence in the academic standards of the provision under review. A 'confidence' judgement will be made if reviewers are satisfied both with current standards, and with the prospect of those standards being maintained into the future. If standards are being achieved, but there is doubt about the ability of the institution to maintain them into the future, reviewers will make a judgement of 'limited confidence'. If, in relation to any of the matters listed below, reviewers feel that arrangements are inadequate to enable standards to be achieved or demonstrated, then their overall judgement will be that they do not have confidence in the academic standards of the provision under review.

82.  Reviewers will assess, for each programme, whether there are clear learning outcomes which appropriately reflect applicable subject benchmark statements and the level of the award. Subject benchmark statements represent general expectations about standards in an academic discipline, particularly in relation to intellectual demand and challenge. The qualifications framework sets expectations for awards at a given level more generally. Reference points are thereby provided to assist reviewers in determining whether provision is meeting the standards expected by the academic community generally, for awards of a particular type and level. If the intended learning outcomes are found not to match those expectations, it would be unlikely that reviewers could have confidence in the standards of the provision. An example of potential failure would be if a postgraduate programme has learning outcomes set at an undergraduate level only.

83.  Reviewers will assess whether the content and design of the curriculum are effective in achieving the intended programme outcomes. It is the curriculum that ensures that students are able to meet the intended outcomes of the programme. Providers should be able to demonstrate how each outcome is supported by the curriculum. 'Curriculum' for this purpose includes both the content necessary to develop understanding and the acquisition of knowledge, and the opportunities to develop practical skills and abilities where these are stated as intended outcomes. If significant intended learning outcomes

are found to be unsupported by the curriculum, it would be unlikely that reviewers could have confidence in the standards of the provision.

84. Reviewers will assess whether the curriculum content is appropriate to each stage of the programme, and to the level of the award. Providers should be able to demonstrate how the design of the curriculum secures academic and intellectual progression by imposing increasing demands on the learner, over time, in terms of the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the capacity for conceptualisation, and increasing autonomy in learning. Reviewers will have regard to the guidance on programme design in the section of the *Code of practice* on programme approval, monitoring and review.

85. Reviewers will assess whether assessment is designed appropriately to measure achievement of the intended outcomes. Providers should be able to demonstrate that achievement of intended outcomes is assessed, and that, in each case, the assessment method selected is appropriate to the nature of the intended outcome. There must also be confidence in the security and integrity of the assessment process, with appropriate involvement of external examiners. An assessment strategy should also have a formative function, providing students with prompt feedback, and assisting them in the development of their intellectual skills. There should be clear and appropriate criteria for different classes of performance, and these criteria should be communicated effectively to students. If significant intended learning outcomes appear not to be assessed, or if there are serious doubts about the integrity of the assessment procedures, it would be unlikely that reviewers could have confidence in the standards of the provision. Reviewers will have regard to the section of the *Code of practice* on assessment of students.

86. Reviewers will assess whether student achievement matches the intended outcomes and level of the award. Reviewers will consider external examiners' reports from the three years prior to the review, and will themselves sample student work. The balance between reliance upon the reports of external examiners and direct sampling of student work will depend on the confidence that reviewers have in the external examining arrangements of the institution. Regard will be had to the section of the *Code of practice* on external examining.

87. Where a review covers a number of subjects, separate judgements on standards will be made in respect of each subject. Where programmes are offered at more than one level, separate judgements will be made in respect of each level, if there are significant differences between them. In all cases, reports will contain a narrative commentary on strengths and weaknesses in relation to each aspect of the standards judgement.

Separate judgements will be made on the academic standards for each professional area covered by the review.

**Judgements on quality of learning opportunities**

88. Judgements about the quality of the learning opportunities offered to students will be made against the broad aims of the provision and the intended learning outcomes of the programmes. Judgements will normally cover all provision within the scope of the review. However, if performance is significantly different in a subject area, or at a particular level, separate judgements will be made.

89. Reviewers will assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning, in relation to curriculum content and programme aims. They will consider large and small group teaching, practical sessions, directed individual learning, the integration of skills within curricula, and distance learning. Reviewers will evaluate the breadth, depth, pace and challenge of teaching; whether there is a suitable variety of teaching methods; the effectiveness of the teaching of subject knowledge; and subject-specific, transferable and practical skills.

90. Reviewers will evaluate student progression by considering recruitment, academic support, and progression within the programme. They will assess whether there is appropriate matching of the abilities of students recruited to the demands of programmes; and whether there are appropriate arrangements for induction and identification of any special learning needs. They will assess the effectiveness of academic support to individuals, including tutorial arrangements and feedback on progress. They will consider general progression within programmes, as well as non-completion rates.

91. In making judgements about learning resources, reviewers will assess whether the minimum resource necessary to deliver each programme is available, and will then consider how effectively resources are utilised in support of the intended learning outcomes of the programmes under review. Consideration will be given to the use of equipment (including IT), accommodation (including laboratories), and the library (including electronic resources). Reviewers will look for a strategic approach to the linkage of resources to programme objectives. Effective utilisation of academic, technical and administrative staff will be considered, as will the matching of the qualifications, experience and expertise of teaching staff to the requirements of the programmes.

92. Reporting on the quality of learning opportunities will place each of the three aspects of provision into one of three categories, 'failing', 'approved' or 'commendable', and will be made on the following basis:

- provision makes a less than adequate contribution to the achievement of the intended outcomes. Significant improvement is required urgently if the provision is to become at least adequate. In the summary report, this judgement will be referred to as 'failing';

- provision enables the intended outcomes to be achieved, but improvement is needed to overcome weaknesses. In the summary report, this judgement will be referred to as 'approved'. The summary will normally include a statement containing the phrase 'approved, but...', which will set out the areas where improvement is needed;

- provision contributes substantially to the achievement of the intended outcomes, with most elements demonstrating good practice. In the summary report, this judgement will be referred to as 'commendable'.

In the case of DoH-funded provision, the review reports will contain an additional overarching narrative summary for the quality of learning opportunities provided by placements which will span the three aspects (Teaching and Learning; Student Progression and; Effective Utilisation of Learning Resources). This summary will not give a separate judgement. The judgements on the quality of learning opportunities in each aspect will encompass both theory and practice. The review teams will sample placements and any inconsistencies in the quality of provision will be expanded upon in the commentary.

93. Within the 'commendable' category, reviewers will identify any specific features of the aspect of provision that are exemplary. To be deemed 'exemplary', a feature must:
- represent sector-leading best practice; and

- be worthy of dissemination to, and emulation by, other providers of comparable programmes; and

- make a significant contribution to the success of the provision being assessed. Incidental or marginal features do not qualify for designation.

The characteristics of exemplary features will, by their nature, vary between institutions and programmes. The criteria listed above will ensure that features identified as 'exemplary' will be broadly comparable in weight and significance.

94. If provision is found to be failing in any aspect of quality, or if reviewers have no confidence in the standards achieved, the provision will be regarded, overall, as 'failing'. It follows that all provision that is not failing is 'approved'. The report of the review will state whether or not provision is approved.

**Maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality**

95. Institution-wide systems for the management and enhancement of standards and quality are addressed through institutional review. Subject reviewers will gather evidence, not least from their discussions with staff and students and their scrutiny of external examiners' reports, on the operation of institutional systems in each subject area. The final section of the subject report will express their confidence, or otherwise, in the ability of the institution to maintain and enhance quality and standards in the particular subject. These views will inform the subsequent institutional review.

Following the publication of reports, the healthcare education providers (higher education institutions and workforce development confederations) will prepare an action plan setting out the action(s) they will take to build on the strengths identified in the report and to address any aspects in need of improvement.

**Part 2 - Institutional review**

96 Part 2 of the *Handbook* describes the method used for the review of institutional management of academic standards and quality.

**The purpose of and approach to institutional review**

97 Institutional review addresses the ultimate responsibility for the management of quality and standards that rests with the institution as a whole. It is concerned particularly with the way an institution exercises its powers as a body able to grant degrees and/or other awards. It results in reports on the degree of confidence that may reasonably be placed in an institution's effectiveness in managing the academic standards of its awards and the quality of its programmes.

98 The process of whole institution review is a continuous and dynamic engagement with the institution and its internal processes over the six years of the review cycle. Much of this engagement is through the sequence of subject reviews during the cycle, which will generate considerable evidence about the way in which institutional systems are working in practice. Nevertheless, there remains a 'senior layer' in the institutional structure where the overall responsibility for quality and standards resides, and which provides the focus for an overall, 'capstone' review of the effectiveness of management of that responsibility.

99 Specifically, institutional review addresses the robustness and security of the systems supporting an institution's awarding function. In most cases, these will relate to the exercise of the institution's own powers. Where an institution does not have direct awarding powers, the review will consider the exercise of any powers delegated under a validation or other collaborative agreement. Review will be concerned with:

- procedures for approval, monitoring and review of academic programmes;

- procedures for acting on the findings of external examiners, subject reviews, and other external scrutinies;

- overall management of assessment processes;

- overall management of any credit systems;

- management of collaborative arrangements with other institutions.

### The Code of practice and the qualifications framework

100. Important points of reference for institutional review are provided by sections of the Code of practice (see Part 1, paragraphs 9 and 10) and the qualifications framework (see Part 1, paragraphs 32 and 33).

101. Institutions should have in place the means of meeting the expectations contained in the precepts of all sections of the Code. Institutional review will focus on those sections which deal directly with institutional responsibilities for quality and standards of academic provision, namely:

- programme approval, monitoring and review;

- assessment of students;

- external examining;

- collaborative provision.

102 In the course of review, enquiries may be made about other sections of the Code. This is most likely to occur if there is information, from subject review or otherwise, which suggests that there may be difficulties or inadequacies in these areas.

103 In reviewing institutions' adherence to the precepts of the Code of practice, it is the intended effect of the precept which is important, not any particular means of achieving it. In certain cases, teams may wish to discuss why an institution has decided not to follow the guidance contained in a section of the Code, but they will not criticise an institution for this if the intended effect of the Code is being achieved by other means.

### The institutional profile

104 The Agency will maintain a dynamic profile of each institution. This will contain the conclusions from the Agency's most recent review of each subject, from the last institutional review, and from any separate reviews of collaborative provision. This profile will provide much of the primary evidence required for institutional review.

105 The profile, and the reports on which it is based, will provide institutional review teams with:

- examples of implementation of institutional quality assurance procedures;

- examples of adherence to the precepts of the Code of practice;

- trends in quality assurance practices;

- possible problem areas for particular scrutiny at institutional level;

- examples of good innovative quality assurance practices.

106 Institutional review will provide a summation and renewal of the institutional profile. Reporting on the degree of confidence that may be placed in an institution's management of its standards and quality will be a major factor in determining the intensity of scrutiny that is appropriate for subject reviews.

107 Until an institution has had an institutional review, using the method described in this *Handbook*, the Agency will use an initial profile (see Part 1, paragraphs 20 to 23, and Annex B) for discussions with institutions about intensity of scrutiny.

**Review events**
*i Main review*

108 Once in every six-year cycle a review team will visit each institution. The purpose of the review visit is to gain insight and understanding into the ways in which an institution is managing its quality of provision and the academic standards of its awards. It will last no longer than necessary for the review team to gather sufficient reliable evidence on which to base a report. In deciding the duration of the visit, regard will be had to the institutional profile and the institution's self-evaluation. Typically a visit will last two or three days, but in exceptional circumstances (eg in the case of a particularly large or complex organisation, or one which has not presented itself very effectively in its self-evaluation) it might be longer. Equally, for a small institution with a well-presented self-evaluation and limited range of provision, it might not be necessary to visit for longer than one day.

109 During the visit, the team will:

- test and verify (so far as possible) the judgements in the self-evaluation;

- review with the institution any specific concerns arising from reviews of subjects or collaborative provision;

- gather any further evidence necessary to enable it to form a view on the effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for the overall management of quality and standards, and of its awarding function.

*ii Interim appraisal*

110 Every year, the Agency will discuss with each institution the pattern of review for subjects due for review in the following year (see Part 1, paragraph 55). Three years after the last full institutional review, this discussion will be extended to take stock more widely of the institution's performance in the maintenance, development and enhancement of its standards and quality of provision.

111 The purpose of this discussion will be to carry out an interim appraisal of the institutional profile generally, in the light of conclusions of subject reviews and any reviews of collaborative provision that have taken place in the last three years. Particular attention will be given to action taken in response to the findings of subject reviews and to action points from the previous institutional review.

112 The interim appraisal is an opportunity to:

- review progress in addressing action points from the previous institutional review, and consider whether action taken by the institution now warrants a different degree of confidence being placed in its systems;

- consider whether there are any recurring problems arising from subject reviews that require particular attention in future subject reviews;

- consider the general trends of subject reviews, action taken to follow up issues identified in them, and the impact such matters should have on future intensity of scrutiny.

113 The interim appraisal will normally be conducted by the member of the Agency's staff who is also conducting the discussion with the institution about the pattern of subject review for the following year. It will take the form of a structured discussion, on the day of the discussion about future subject review, with one or two of the senior staff of the institution

responsible for quality and standards. The event will not normally involve the preparation of a self-evaluation or other special documentation. There will be no published report, but an agreed note will be kept of the matters discussed.

114 If subject reviews have disclosed a pattern of difficulties, the interim appraisal may be used in a more formal way to address these. In this event, the discussion may involve one or more academic reviewers as well as a member of the Agency's staff. The institution may be invited to provide a written commentary on the action it has taken to address the difficulties. In the light of the appraisal, the Agency may propose a further review of action to address the matter, or may bring forward the date of the main institutional review.

### iii Collaborative activity

115 Collaborative activity is defined as a collaborative or partnership arrangement, with another institution or organisation, involving the provision of programmes of study and the granting of awards and qualifications. Arrangements which involve the implicit or explicit endorsement by the institution of third party services are also included in the definition, whether or not use of such services is a condition of registration for the institution's programme or award.

116 The purpose of the review of collaborative activity is to establish the extent to which an institution is:

- assuring the quality of programmes offered by, or in association with, a partner organisation for the institution's own awards;

- ensuring that the academic standards of its awards gained through study with partner organisations are the same as those applied within the institution itself.

117 An institution's management of its collaborative activity is included among the topics to be covered by the main review. Where the activity can be reviewed effectively through the main review alone, this will be done. There are two circumstances in which some or all of an institution's collaborative provision may be reviewed separately.

118 First, the provision may be too substantial in volume, varied in type, or involve too many partners, for the main review to do justice to it. In these circumstances the Agency may propose a separate review to enable a reliable judgement to be made.

119 Second, for reasons of cost effectiveness, the Agency conducts reviews of overseas collaborative arrangements on a country by country basis. The Agency may propose to include some or all of an institution's collaborative provision in a particular country in such reviews. Separate guidance on the conduct of reviews of overseas provision is available from the Agency.

### Self-evaluation document

120 The starting point for the main review will be a self-evaluation document. This will contain the institution's analysis of how effectively it manages the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards, and how it meets the expectations of relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*. Guidance on preparing a self-evaluation document is at Annex L.

### Reports

121 Institutional review will result in a published report once in each six-year cycle, following the main review, on the effectiveness of an institution's systems for managing the quality of its provision, the standards of its awards and the security of its awarding function. The report will be narrative in style, and will identify both good practice and matters where the Agency believes that improvement action should be taken.

122 Action points will be categorised as 'essential', 'advisable' or 'desirable' on the following basis:

- essential matters that are currently putting academic standards and/or quality at risk, and which require urgent corrective action;

- advisable matters that have the potential to put academic standards and/or quality at risk, and which require either preventive, or less urgent corrective action;

- desirable matters that have the potential to enhance quality and/or further secure academic standards.

In the case of any action point rated as 'essential', the Agency will normally seek from the institution an account of action taken to address the matter, 12 months after publication of the report.

123 Reports will also contain a statement of the degree of confidence that the Agency considers may reasonably be placed in the continuing effectiveness of the institution's quality assurance arrangements. Normally, such statements will relate to the overall arrangements that an institution has in place. A separate statement may be made in respect of an institution's overall collaborative arrangements, as a result of a separate review of that collaborative provision. A confidence statement on overseas collaborative provision generally will not normally be made as a result of a review of partnerships in one country only, if an institution has such partnerships in more than one country.

124 A statement that confidence cannot be placed in institutional arrangements for the management of quality and standards should be a rare occurrence. Such a statement would be likely to result from a number of matters requiring 'essential' action, the combined effect of which is to render ineffective the quality assurance arrangements as a whole.

125 A statement that limited confidence can be placed in institutional arrangements for the management of quality and standards will normally be made if there is one, or a small number of matters requiring 'essential' action, and it is clear that the failings could readily be put right. Such a statement might also result if there were no 'essential' action points, but a large number of matters where action is 'advisable'. The judgement will depend on the nature and weight of the 'advisable' action points.

126 In all other cases a statement will be made that overall confidence can be placed in institutional quality assurance systems. The term 'overall confidence' does not necessarily mean that there are no matters where improvement could be made; but minor weaknesses only should not place an institution in a lower category. The narrative of the report will discuss strengths and weaknesses, and will also identify exemplary features of the arrangements.

127 To be deemed 'exemplary', a feature must:

- represent sector-leading best practice; and

- be worthy of dissemination to, and emulation by, other institutions with comparable missions; and

- make a significant contribution to the success of overall institutional arrangements for assuring quality and standards.

The characteristics of exemplary features will, by their nature, vary between institutions, but such features will be broadly comparable in weight and significance.

128 Further information on reports is at Annex M.

## Annex A - Academic Reviewers

### Introduction

1 The Agency operates an equal opportunities policy. All applicants will be considered on the basis of their ability to meet the specifications outlined below. The Agency evaluates the performance of all reviewers, using feedback from review visits.

2 There are three types of academic reviewer used by the Agency:

- subject specialist reviewers, with current teaching experience in the discipline concerned, or experience of relevant professional or occupational practice;

- review coordinators, who lead subject review teams, and have extensive experience of quality assurance and programme approval in higher education, usually gained by working with such procedures in more than one discipline;

- institutional reviewers, who hold, or have recently held, senior management positions in higher education institutions.

### Qualities required in all reviewers

3 Effective reviewers will possess the following qualities:

- demonstrable commitment to the principles of quality assurance in HE and/or in the placement learning environment;

- an enquiring and sceptical disposition;

- powers of analysis and sound judgement;

- personal authority and presence coupled with the ability to act as an effective team member;

- good time management skills including experience of chairing meetings;

- the ability to make appropriate judgements in the context of complex institutions different from their own;

- experience of organisation and management, particularly in relation to teaching and learning matters;

- high standard of oral and written communication, preferably with experience of writing formal reports to published deadlines.

4 In addition, reviewers are expected to have a clear knowledge and understanding of the Agency's whole review process, a reasonable acquaintance with all published sections of the *Code of practice*, and a detailed working knowledge of those sections of the *Code* that are the subject of regular consideration in reviews.

A sound knowledge of the *Code of practice* on Placement Learning as well as the professional and statutory regulatory bodies' requirements is necessary.

### Recruitment, training and role of subject specialist reviewers

5 Subject specialist reviewers are recruited by the Agency from individuals nominated by institutions or other organisations and from individuals who reply to advertisements. The Agency prefers to recruit reviewers who are available for the entire review period, but will also consider shorter involvement under some circumstances. Reviewers are recruited and trained to ensure that they are capable of carrying out their duties effectively. In particular, subject specialist reviewers who undertake reviews should:

- possess the knowledge and skills set out in detail below;

- have completed successfully the Agency's training programme;

- ensure that they are available for the whole period of a review for which they have been selected;

- normally be available for up to three reviews per year.

The additional training for reviewers undertaking reviews of health profession provision must also have been completed successfully.

6 Training of reviewers is carried out on behalf of the Agency by means of two-day residential courses. The Agency will pay all travel and subsistence expenses incurred by reviewers, in line with its published travel and subsistence arrangements. It will not pay fees to reviewers for attendance at training courses.

These conditions apply also to the additional one-day training that will be undertaken.

7 The Agency publishes a register of subject specialist reviewers and makes this available to all institutions. The primary purpose of the register is to show, for each reviewer, the main areas of teaching and learning that s/he is qualified to review. For this purpose, the Agency uses the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS), established by HESA and UCAS for use by both organisations from 2002. As far as possible, the Agency ensures that the combined experience and expertise of the reviewers on its register reflects the range of the provision on offer across the HE sector.

8 The key purpose of acting as a subject specialist reviewer is to contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of standards in higher education by reporting to the Agency on the standards and quality of the academic programmes scrutinised during subject reviews. Subject specialist reviewers are expected to agree individual timetables of activity with the review coordinator, with a view to making the most effective contribution to the review. The responsibilities of reviewers include:

- reading and analysing the self-evaluation prepared by the institution and any other documentation sent in advance of a review;

- participating in visits to the subject provider in order to gather, share, test and verify evidence;

- making judgements on the academic standards achieved and the quality of the learning opportunities provided;

- contributing to and commenting on the compilation of the report of the review.

The Agency not only tries to ensure that the particular experience of individual reviewers is relevant to the reviews they undertake, but that, over time, each reviewer works in a variety of teams scrutinising a range of institutions.

9 Subject specialists review and evaluate the self-evaluation provided for the subject, with particular emphasis on curricular contents and their suitability for achieving the programme outcomes.

10 Subject specialists review and evaluate the assessment processes designed for the programmes and determine whether they are suitable to assess programme outcomes as stated in the programme specifications.

11 Subject specialists judge the overall standards for subjects and the procedures associated with their maintenance and enhancement.

12 Subject specialists review and evaluate overall student achievement, including progression to employment; the contribution made to student achievement by the quality of teaching; opportunities for learning; academic support intended to ensure effective progression of students; and learning resources and their deployment (including staffing).

13 Finally, subject specialists contribute to the compilation of a report to the Agency. Each subject specialist will be expected to prepare material for the various sections of the report and may be expected to contribute to the writing.

**Knowledge and skills required of subject specialist reviewers**

14 To carry out the role outlined above, for each review subject specialists will need to demonstrate:

Experience, knowledge and understanding of HE

- at least five years' experience of providing teaching and learning in higher education or, in the case of industrially- or professionally-based reviewers, familiarity with higher education teaching and learning;

- familiarity with academic support strategies and the functions of academic tutorials;

- experience of examining (and preferably external examining); eg assessment of practice would be considered appropriate experience

- knowledge of the quality assurance processes employed by institutions providing higher education;

Knowledge and understanding within the subject area

- knowledge of the subject benchmark information produced for programmes within the relevant subject area;

- familiarity with the subject matter of the self-evaluation and the programme specifications written for the subject area;

- familiarity with comparable programmes and standards of awards in other institutions;

- understanding of external examiners' reports and internal documentation;

- understanding of programme entry requirements and ability to interpret progression statistics for each stage of the programmes, including withdrawal, transfer and failure rates;

- understanding of programme learning objectives;

- familiarity with destinations data and employment statistics;

- understanding of the context in which provision is delivered;

- understanding of health and social care policy.

Skills

- ability to conduct meetings and interviews with staff;

- ability to conduct meetings with a range of current and former groups of students;

- ability to write succinctly and coherently;

- ability to meet exacting timescales and deadlines;

32

- ability to work effectively as a member of a team.

## Recruitment, training and role of review coordinators

15 Review coordinators are also recruited from individuals nominated by institutions or other organisations, and from individuals who reply to advertisements. They may be seconded from institutions or independent consultancies. All must possess extensive experience of HE and of the assurance of standards and quality. They will be expected to perform a number of duties, of which managing reviews and writing reports are the major responsibilities. Opportunities to contribute to other activities such as editing reports, training subject specialist reviewers and producing subject overview reports may also be available.

16 Because of the relative complexity of the review coordinator role, the individuals recruited will undergo a longer induction and training process than that provided for subject specialist reviewers. Induction into the review method will include attendance at, and participation in, at least one subject specialist reviewer training course, as well as attendance at workshops and conferences arranged by the Agency. The Agency will pay all travel and subsistence expenses incurred by review coordinators during induction and training, in line with the Agency's published arrangements. Fees will also be paid for review coordinator induction and training.

Review co-ordinators engaged with the review of health profession programmes will also attend the additional training. Travel and subsistence expenses and fees will be paid for attendance at this event.

17 Review coordinators should normally be available to manage up to eight reviews per year. Reviews take place throughout the academic year and are variable in length. Review coordinators will need to organise their time, and to reach agreement with their teams of reviewers, about the pattern of review activities in such a way as to ensure effective use of the time available.

18 All subject reviews consist of four main activities:
- preparation for subject review;
- visits to the subject provider;
- analysis of documentary evidence;
- report writing.

The review coordinator is responsible for maintaining an overview of the range and balance of these activities, and for helping the subject specialist reviewers to apportion their time effectively. The achievement of an appropriate balance between the various activities requires planning in advance of, and coordination throughout, the review; above all, it must enable the team to develop a robust evidence base on which to make judgements.

## Knowledge and skills required of review coordinators

19 In order to carry out their role, review coordinators will need to demonstrate:
Knowledge and understanding of HE
- recent knowledge and understanding of current issues;
- awareness of current teaching methods and curricula;
- knowledge and understanding of the assurance of standards and quality;

- experience of liaison with senior management and staff at other levels;

Skills

- ability to manage small teams (with experience either in HE or in industry);

- ability to work within tight timescales and to strict deadlines;

- ability to lead a team of experts;

- ability to communicate effectively in face-to-face interaction;

- ability to produce clear and succinct reports to time;

- experience of word processing.

20 The essential qualities outlined above might be reinforced by experience of a wide range of teaching in HE and by experience of programme accreditation by professional or statutory bodies, programme approval or validation events, quality audits, quality assessment/subject review or educational inspection.

## Recruitment, training and role of institutional reviewers

21 Institutional reviewers are selected both from applicants nominated by institutions and from self-nominees.

22 Reviewers are appointed for a period of three years, and may be invited to continue for a further period. During the period of appointment, reviewers may be asked to undertake up to nine review activities. No reviewer will be expected to undertake more than three activities in any year, but the Agency cannot guarantee to offer a particular number of reviews during a three-year appointment.

23 A training programme is provided by the Agency, which includes an opportunity to observe part of a review in progress. The Agency will pay all travel and subsistence expenses incurred by reviewers, in line with its published travel and subsistence arrangements. It will not pay fees to reviewers for attendance at training programmes.

24 The responsibilities of reviewers include:

- reading and analysing self-evaluations prepared by institutions and any other documentation sent in advance of reviews;

- participating in briefing meetings;

- participating in visits to institutions in order to gather, share, test and verify evidence;

- making judgements on institutions' management of academic standards and quality;

- contributing to and commenting on compilation of the review report;

- attending reviewers' briefing and training meetings.

## Knowledge and skills required of institutional reviewers

25 Selection is undertaken by the Agency with the intention of ensuring that reviewers:

- are knowledgeable about HE institutions;

- have wide experience of academic management and quality assurance;

- can readily assimilate a large amount of disparate information;

- can analyse and make reliable judgements about complex arrangements;

- can hold discussions at a high level about strategic and operational approaches;

- have personal credibility with senior managers and heads of HE institutions.

## Institutional review secretaries

26 Some reviews will require particular administrative support, which may be provided by a review secretary. A typical review secretary is an institutional administrator with at least three years' experience of academic administration, including committee support. Nominations of persons willing to act as review secretaries are invited, from time to time, from heads of administration in higher education institutions. Supporting a review activity as secretary is often seen as a valuable staff development opportunity.

## Annex B - Initial Profiles

### Constructing a profile

1 The institutional review element of academic review, together with the cumulative results of subject review, will supply the information about institutional systems of quality assurance needed to discuss, and to secure agreements about, appropriate intensity of scrutiny of subject review. Where there has not yet been an institutional review within the integrated method, the Agency will use existing information to construct initial profiles for use as a starting point in discussions with institutions.

2 The Agency will prepare a 2,000-word profile of each HE institution, based on an analysis of information contained in academic audit reports, collaborative audit reports and subject review/teaching quality assessment reports. In the case of institutions, such as FE institutions, for which quality audit reports are not available, profiles will not be produced, and discussions about intensity of scrutiny will be based primarily on the previous subject review/teaching quality assessment report.

3 To construct a profile, the Agency will:

- review audit and collaborative audit reports (if available) for an institution to prepare an introduction to the profile summarising institutional background, general features and mission. Particular attention will be paid to the listings of strengths and weaknesses that have been a feature of the concluding sections of audit reports published since 1995. A summary of up to 500 words, in which general features and mission are described, will be prepared;

- review quality assessment and subject review summary data in order to identify particular features, obvious strengths and weaknesses, and overall trends across as wide a variety of subjects as possible. A summary of up to 250 words will identify particular institutional features and summarise overall results;

- review subject reports from 1995 on, in order to identify strengths and weaknesses reported by subject specialist reviewers. A summary of up to 1,250 words will evaluate evidence related to:

a the curricula, their design and content;
b student learning, assessment and student achievement, including progression to further study and to employment;
c teaching and learning;
d student progression, including academic support;
e learning resources, including staffing.

### Using a profile

4 'Scope and preference' surveys will be used to determine the range and the complexity of subjects offered by individual institutions. When these have been completed, the Agency will initiate discussions with institutions in order to agree the intensity of scrutiny likely to be required for each subject review.

5 Initial profiles will be shared with the institution concerned but will not be published more widely. The information on which they are based will be of differing age; this will be borne in mind when constructing the profiles and entering discussions with institutions about intensity of review.

6 Each subject review will be considered separately for the purposes of determining the intensity of scrutiny. Regard will be had both to specific information about the subject provision and to the overall record of management of quality and standards by the institution. Strengths and weaknesses of the subject provision will be identified in order to guide review teams towards those matters on which they might concentrate during review. Reviewers will be able to use previous subject reports to help them in this respect but must take into account the currency of the information available and the perception of an institution about its own strengths and weaknesses. In the absence of agreement on the intensity of review that is appropriate, the decision of the Agency will be final.

7 Discussions about intensity of scrutiny will provide an opportunity for institutions to draw attention to changes which have taken place since the last review of a subject and, in particular, steps which may have been taken to address any shortcomings identified. The outcome of the discussions should be agreement on areas that should receive particular attention during the course of reviews, and areas where it appears that greater reliance could be placed on indirect evidence.

8 The initial agreement reached will be reviewed after analysis of the self-evaluation by reviewers and again, if necessary, during the review itself. If a team of reviewers considers that it requires more or less time than agreed, the matter will be referred to the Agency and discussed with the institution.

**Annex C - Guidelines for producing self-evaluation documents for subject review**

**Introduction**

1 A self-evaluation document is a statement which demonstrates that a subject provider has evaluated the following, in a constructively self-critical manner:

- appropriateness of the academic standards it has set for its programmes;

- effectiveness of the curriculum in delivering the intended outcomes of the programmes;

- effectiveness of assessment in measuring attainment of the intended outcomes;

- extent to which the intended standards and outcomes are achieved by students; and

- quality of the learning opportunities provided for students.

As DoH-funded provision encompasses placement learning, the self-evaluation document will be endorsed by placement providers, some of whom may be involved in its development.

2 A self-evaluation should discuss both strengths and weaknesses of provision, as perceived by the provider. The document is an opportunity for the provider to demonstrate how the strengths of the provision identified in previous subject reviews or accreditation events have been built upon, and how any weaknesses identified have been addressed. Where weaknesses remain, plans for addressing these should be summarised. Reviewers will give credit for appropriate remedial plans that address effectively any acknowledged weaknesses.

As the self-evaluation document will necessarily address placement learning, the self-evaluation document should be endorsed by placement providers who are involved with the provision.

3 These guidelines have been prepared to help institutions prepare self-evaluation documents. They are neither prescriptive, nor exhaustive. Academic reviewers will use self-evaluation documents in any reasonable form, provided they contain the information that reviewers need to plan and conduct the review.

4 Academic review involves testing and verifying statements made in self-evaluation documents, thereby arriving at judgements on standards and quality. This process places the self-evaluation document at the centre of the review. A high quality, reflective document that draws upon robust internal review procedures is likely to lead to a review that places a minimum burden on the institution. An inadequate document that is poorly organised and which is descriptive rather than evaluative, will leave reviewers needing to gather for themselves a far greater proportion of the evidence they will require to make their judgements, resulting in a review that may prove more burdensome to the institution.

5 Self-evaluation documents should commence with a short statement of the range of the provision being reviewed. Programme specifications (see Annex D) should be appended. Factual material provided in the programme specifications need not be repeated in the document.

6 A flexible approach should be taken to preparing and presenting self-evaluation documents to accommodate the range and potential complexity of subject provision. For example, some subjects may well contain very large numbers of programmes; some 'programmes' may comprise complex modular schemes; some subjects may be aggregated for review purposes. The self-evaluation document will be endorsed by placement providers, some of whom may be involved in its development.

7 Where large numbers of programmes are included under a subject heading, or where a subject category contains more than one discrete discipline, it may be sensible to evaluate discrete programmes or groups of related programmes separately. Where this is done, the broad structure indicated below should still be used, but the self-evaluations should be presented as a coherent package. Thus, in a subject such as engineering, with a number of discrete sub-disciplines, an institution may wish to present separate self-evaluations of each discipline, introduced by a short overview dealing with the institution's approach to the subject as a whole.

Where the review covers two or more different areas of professional practice each will be addressed separately but within a coherent package of documents. Word limits may be treated as guidelines rather than inflexible requirements. The word limit for large and complex visits is, however, mandatory.

8 Where subject provision is offered within a wider multi-disciplinary framework, general information about the framework and the main pathways within any modular structure, should be included in an annex to the self-evaluation. An institution may choose to nominate a group of subjects to be reviewed together if they are linked through options or pathways available within a modular structure. In this case, an introductory overview of the approach to the provision as a whole may be appropriate.

9 Self-evaluation documents should be structured to address:

A Overall aims of the subject provision
B Evaluation of the subject provision:

i learning outcomes;
ii curricula and assessment;
iii quality of learning opportunities; including placement learning
iv maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality;
and should have annexed:
C Factual information about the subject provision:
i a programme specification for each programme in the subject(s) under review; and
ii any information about relevant modular structures or collaborative arrangements.

10 When drafting self-evaluation documents, institutions may find it helpful to refer to:

- the precepts in those sections of the *Code of practice* relating directly to quality and standards; and

- the prompts and questions for academic reviewers in the *aide-mémoire* in Annex E.

- the *Code of practice: Placement Learning* and other guidance published by the Professional Statutory and Regulatory bodies.

## Overall aims of the subject provision

11 There must be a clear statement of the overall aims of the subject provision. This will be used by reviewers to assess whether provision achieves its broad purposes. The statement of aims will be reproduced at the start of the subject review report. Overall aims will reflect the distinctive mission of the institution, and might place study of a discipline in contexts such as:

- enabling students to develop their capacity to learn;

- meeting international, national, regional or local needs;

- preparing students for employment or for further study;

- widening access to higher education.

Other factors such as the preparation of students for the first stage of professional practice will be addressed where appropriate.

12 Statements of aims should be succinct but should convey clearly the parameters of the subject provision. They may be presented as narrative statements, bullet points, or as a mixture of the two. They should not exceed 500 words in length.

## Evaluation of the subject provision

13 The evaluation should indicate where the supporting evidence may be found, eg within other institutional documentation. Such references will help the reviewers in gathering evidence, and avoid the need for merely descriptive material to be included in an evaluative document.

## Learning outcomes

14 The first part of the evaluation should address the appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes in relation to the overall aims of the provision, relevant subject benchmark statements, and other external reference points. The evaluation should discuss the effectiveness of measures to ensure that staff and students have a clear understanding of the aims and intended outcomes of programmes.

## Curricula and assessment

15 The evaluation should review the effectiveness of the content and design of the curricula in enabling the intended outcomes of programmes to be achieved. Specific issues that are likely to be pursued by reviewers include:

- academic and intellectual progression within the curriculum;

- appropriateness of content in relation to the level of the award;

- inclusion of recent developments in the subject;

- reflection of best practice in pedagogy.

- Placement learning.

16 The evaluation should review the effectiveness of student assessment in measuring achievement of the intended outcomes of programmes. Reviewers are likely to be interested in the effectiveness of assessment in:

- enabling students to demonstrate achievement;

- discriminating between different categories of performance;

- promoting student learning (especially through formative assessment).

- placement learning.

**Quality of learning opportunities**

17 The evaluation should review the effectiveness of teaching and learning (of both theory and practice), in relation to programme aims and curriculum content. Reviewers are likely to be interested in:

- range and appropriateness of teaching methods employed; (including placement learning);

- ways in which participation by students is encouraged;

- quality of learning materials provided;

- strategies for staff development to enhance teaching performance;

- effectiveness of team teaching;

- student workloads.

18 The evaluation should review student progression. The effectiveness of strategies of academic support, and the extent to which they take account of the ability profile of the student intake in relation to the aims of the programmes, should be discussed. Reviewers are likely to be interested in:

- recruitment and induction of students;

- identification of and action on any special learning needs;

- feedback to students on their progress;

- overall academic guidance and supervision;

- tutorial support.

- strategies to reduce/limit attrition rates.

19 The evaluation should review the adequacy of learning resources and the effectiveness of their utilisation. In particular, the evaluation should demonstrate a strategic approach to linking resources to intended programme outcomes. Reviewers will be interested not only in physical resources, but also in the effective use of human resources through such things as induction, mentoring and development of staff. Evaluation of action taken to prepare for or build on accreditation as an Investor in People could be relevant.

Maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality

20 There should be an evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures taken to maintain and enhance the quality and standards of provision. Reviewers will be particularly interested in the effectiveness of evaluation and use of quantitative data and qualitative feedback in a strategy of enhancement and continuous improvement.

The self-evaluation document should include consideration of the effectiveness of partnership arrangements with, for example, workforce development confederations and other partners. It should also address the extent to which the expectations set out in the *Code of practice* on placement learning are being met.

21 Quantitative data might include:

- statistics on student achievement in all forms of summative assessment;

- degree classifications;

- entry qualifications;

- progression and completion rates;

- first employment destinations.

22 Qualitative feedback might include:

- student feedback;

- staff feedback;

- external examiners' reports;

- employers' views on graduates or diplomates they have recruited;

- accreditation and monitoring reports by professional or statutory bodies;

- previous subject reviews;

- comments from internal re-validation.

See Annex R.

23 The evaluation of the subject provision should not exceed 6,000 words in length. See also Annex C paragraph 7.

Annexes

24 A programme specification for each programme covered by the review should be annexed. Separate programme specifications are not required for every possible pathway within a modular structure. For joint honours, or similar combined studies programmes, a short