



## **Consultation on changes to the *Handbook for institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland 2006***

### **Student membership of institutional audit teams**

#### **1994 Group response**

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The following is a response from the 1994 Group to the above consultation. For more detailed responses to the questions contained in the consultation document please see the individual submissions of the Group's member institutions.

Members of the 1994 Group are: University of Bath, Birkbeck University of London, Durham University, University of East Anglia, University of Essex, University of Exeter, Goldsmiths University of London, Royal Holloway University of London, Lancaster University, University of Leicester, Loughborough University, Queen Mary University of London, University of Reading, University of St Andrews, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of Surrey, University of Sussex and University of York.

#### **General Comments**

As part of our ongoing work aimed at enhancing the student experience the 1994 Group has strongly promoted the necessary role of students as partners within the key processes that effect them within our own institutions and across the sector. Consequently, we strongly endorse the QAA's view that student members should be included on Institutional Audit teams.

As noted in the consultation document, students have been involved in audit processes in Scotland for a number of years. We would like, therefore, to note the experiences of the University of St Andrews, member of the 1994 Group, which has used both undergraduate and postgraduate students in institution-led review at subject level, has provided student reviewers for QAA Scotland, has experience of working in teams with student reviewers, and has had a student on the review team for its own Enhancement Led Institutional Review. The University has in all cases found the experience beneficial and helpful, finding that

students engage positively and intelligently with the process, and that they are fully able to contribute accurate and thoughtful analysis and questioning. Far from being solely engaged with a student representative role, they have sought to understand the subject of review with the same level of sophistication as academic staff, and have been if anything more critical of and less receptive to special pleading by students.

## **Consultation Questions**

- 1. Do you agree that from spring 2010 all audits should include a student auditor, or should an opt-out be available until the end of the audit cycle? If an opt-out option is allowed, should an extra auditor be recruited to ensure teams of equal sizes?**

A number of members have expressed a concern that the QAA has chosen to go ahead with the introduction of student members of audit teams mid-cycle in Spring 2010, rather than extending the pilot period until the end of the cycle.

However, if it is decided that the changes are implemented in Spring 2010, the Group strongly believes that institutions should be given the option to opt out, in order to help ensure the continuity and comparability of audits.

If such an opt-out option is given, the Group does not believe that an extra academic auditor should be recruited to replace the student member.

- 2. Do you agree that the student auditor should be an additional member of the audit team?**

The Group believes it is right that students are full additional members of the audit team, rather than having a distinct role, as this preserves the existing level of academic expertise whilst adding the complementary student perspective.

- 3. Do you agree with the proposed role for the student auditor?**

The Group agrees with the proposed role for student auditors as set out in the documentation, and believes that the concept of student auditors is entirely consistent with the principle of peer review.

A number of member Universities stress the need to be mindful of the fact that the role of student auditor will be demanding in terms of the student's time and effort, and the need for the QAA to consider, when selecting student auditors and through the audit process itself, how best to minimise disruption to a student member's employment or academic work.

- 4. Do you agree with the categories for eligible students? Are there others?**

There is broad agreement in the Group with the categories for eligible students. However, a number of institutions believe that experience within an HEI should amount to two years' full time study or equivalent, and that recent experience should mean within twelve months.

**5. Do you agree with these selection criteria? Are there others that you would wish to suggest?**

The Group believes that the selection criteria detailed in Annex B of the consultation document are broadly appropriate.

**6. Do you consider these to be the main requirements for training of a student auditor?**

The importance of adequate training for student auditors is very strongly stressed across the 1994 Group Universities, alongside a careful selection process, in order to ensure that students who are selected are capable of the demands of review.

There is broad agreement with the main requirements for training of student auditors contained in Annex B of the consultation document.

**TN - 01/03/09**