

**Residential Workshop:
Audit and Best Practice for Research Degree Programmes**

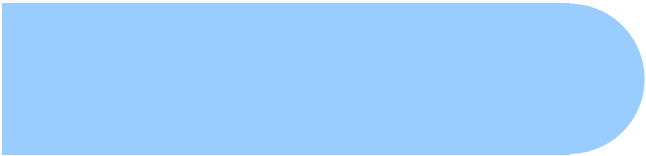


**Theme C: Preparing for the RDP Audit
– the Bradford University experience**

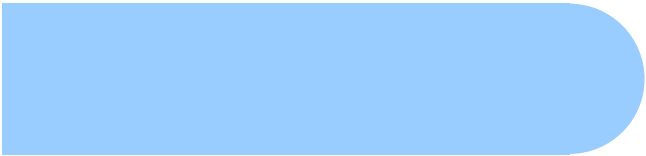
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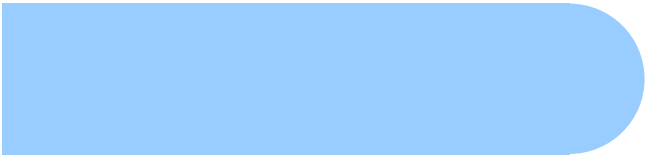
Preparing for the RDP Audit

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- **‘Audit Trail’ of the QAA Audit Process**
 - **Key issues for RDP Audit**
 - **Practicalities**
 - **Significant observations**
 - **If we had to do it all over again ...**

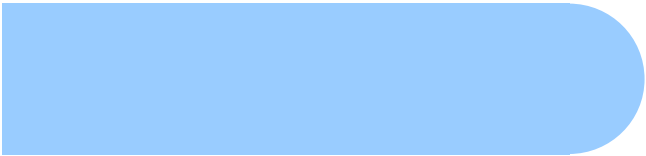
‘Audit Trail’ of the QAA Audit Process

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- **Institutional Audit timetable**
 - **IA Briefing Paper – Section 6**
 - Institutional arrangements for PGRS Draft #1
 - **IA Briefing Paper – Section 6 (Final)**
 - **IA Schedule of Meetings**
 - **QAA Audit Report – Section 6**
 - Institutional arrangements for PGRS (Final)
 - University response to QAA Report
 - **QAA Summary of Institutional Audit**

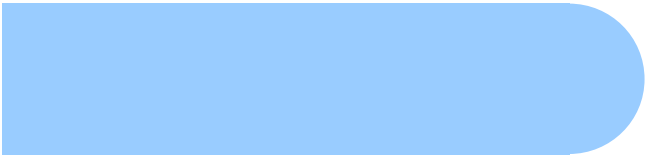
Key issues for RDP Audit – 1

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- Follow the QAA Handbook structure as advised
 - Logical starting point – outcomes of Special Review
 - Ensure central role of *QAA Code of Practice for RDP*
 - Evidence of awareness of potential difficulties, inconsistencies is essential
 - Important to have ownership of audit process at senior management level
 - Ensure wide consultation in advance of, and during, preparation of key documents
 - In general: be ‘up front’ with problems
 - Find evidence of action taken to address known issues

Key issues for RDP Audit – 2

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- **Focus on management of academic standards – not on the academic content of programmes**
 - **QA processes for taught elements of eg Professional Doctorates – align with processes for PG Masters**
 - **QAA may request additional evidence before visit**
 - Interpret request with care – may indicate likely lines of enquiry

Practicalities

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- **Institutional participants should be:**
 - Carefully selected for balance, experience, institutional memory etc
 - Usually participating in only one meeting
 - Carefully prepared and fully briefed on relevant policy issues, practices, likely lines of enquiry
 - Credible witnesses to embedding the Institutional C of P
 - Unscripted !
 - Briefed before – *and debriefed after* – each Meeting
 - To examine QA processes in depth, QAA Auditors at UB selected one Course Approval and one Quinquennial Review for further discussion

Significant observations – 1

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- **“Auditors are not looking for unthinking compliance – they appreciate self-evaluative engagement with the essential processes maintaining academic standards”**

**Jenny Beaumont,
*Academic Standards
Support Unit, UB
November, 2008***

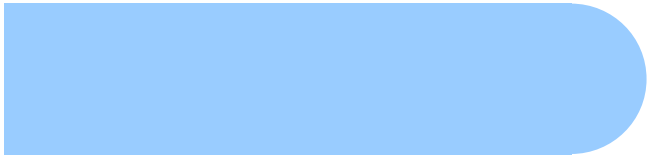
Significant observations – 2

- **“RDP Audit was not nearly so traumatic after completing the Special Review as it might have been”**
[Senior ASSU Administrator]
- **“There’s really no need to be intimidated by the QAA”**
 - Believe in your case for successful audit
 - Don’t try to cover up issues
 - Ø ... but there’s no need to wave a red flag ...
 - Acknowledge shortcomings / weaknesses – but with a credible plan for remedy
- **Make sure your colleagues with significant ‘Institutional memory’ are consulted and available ‘on the day’**
- **Senior Management buy-in to the audit process is essential at all stages**

Significant observations – 3

- **The easiest aspects of the RDP audit process?**
 - “Finding and writing about evidence – because of the Special Review and the following internal review”
- **The most difficult aspects of the RDP process?**
 - “The balancing act required to recruit only 2 PGRS students to represent taught masters and research degree areas”
 - “The problem to identify academics for each meeting (only one appearance allowed), who:
 - Ø Knew about the system
 - Ø Contribute to the RDP quality processes
 - Ø and were reasonable ...”

Preparing for the RDP Audit



- **If we had to do it all over again ...**