



the union of uea students  
uea graduate students association

**BIG EARS SURVEY 2003**  
**Student Opinions of UEA**

**The QAA  
student  
submission  
2003**

SUMMARY

## What is the QAA?



The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is the University version of Ofsted and the National Curriculum, with a twist. It sets out and reviews the standards and quality to which universities operate at. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are available to students so they can achieve their degree.

## How does it do this?

By the scarily phrased 'Institutional Audit' process. This ensures that institutions are "providing higher education, awards and qualifications of an acceptable quality and an appropriate academic standard".

There are two main parts to the Institutional Audit - the institutions submission, and a submission from the main student representational body - in our case that means the Union of UEA Students (UUEAS) and the Graduate Students' Association (GSA). This gives students an excellent opportunity to make their voice heard on all areas of the University.

## So when's all this happening at UEA?

It's already begun! On the 1st September 2003, the Union of UEA Students and the Graduate Students' Association submitted a report on behalf of all UEA students. In December of this year, the QAA team will come to interview people in the University and in the Union in order to follow up and find any important information that wasn't provided in the previous submissions.

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## How did we compile the student submission?



You may remember filling in the 'Big Ears' Survey in March 2003. We received over 2000 responses to the survey, approximately 18% of all UEA students, and this formed the base of our evidence for the UUEAS/GSA submission. We also used internal University documents and research, issues raised at School-level, central-level and Union-level committees, and the experience of our student officers and the Student Advice Centre.

## What areas did the report cover?

The UUEAS/GSA report covered all aspects to life at UEA. The main areas covered were:

- Student recruitment and admissions
- Academic appeals and academic complaints
- Information on student programmes - handbooks, websites, etc
- Programmes approval, monitoring and review - including feedback forms and student consultation
- Postgraduate Programmes - including research supervision
- Student Assessment - coursework-examination balance, how your work is marked, consistency of coursework penalties, anonymous coursework marking...
- Careers Education, Information and Guidance
- Placement Learning and Studying Abroad
- Library and Learning Resources - including learning support and lecture handouts
- Student Support - including the academic advisor system and disability support
- Student Representation - including representation on School-level and central-level committees

## What did the report say?

As you'll have guessed from the many areas the report covered, the report raised a lot of issues. Some of the main issues raised by the report include:

- A significant number of students experienced some form of change to their course of study, and were generally provided with little information regarding these changes.
- Large numbers of undergraduate students are dissatisfied with the lack of 'Freshers Week' or formal induction programme within the university and their schools of study.
- Large numbers of students have little knowledge of the academic appeals and academic complaints procedures.
- There is a widespread unwillingness amongst students to undergo the academic appeals and complaints procedures, largely due to negative perceptions regarding the procedures.
- A large number of students do not feel their opinions and feedback is taken into account in course and unit reviews.
- Many postgraduate students receive excellent supervision, but supervision standards vary greatly between, and even within, schools.
- Students are not always aware of the standard of research supervision they should be receiving.
- A significant proportion of students are not confident their work is marked consistently.
- There is majority support for anonymous coursework marking.
- Late work penalties are not consistent across the institution.
- Less than 40% of students have used the services the Careers Centre offers
- There is a considerable inconsistency between different schools' use of the Academic advisor system, despite high importance placed on advisor system by students.
- There is a strong desire by both UUEAS and GSA to increase student involvement in the University's decision-making processes.



## Where can I find out more?

Full copies of the UUEAS / GSA QAA submission are available from Union House reception, and from the Union Academic Officer ([su.academic@uea.ac.uk](mailto:su.academic@uea.ac.uk)).

The report and the survey results are also available on the Union webpages:  
[www.stu.uea.ac.uk](http://www.stu.uea.ac.uk).

You can find out more about the Quality Assurance Agency, what it does and its codes of practice at: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

If you have any questions or feedback on what you've read, contact the Academic Officer: [su.academic@uea.ac.uk](mailto:su.academic@uea.ac.uk)



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