

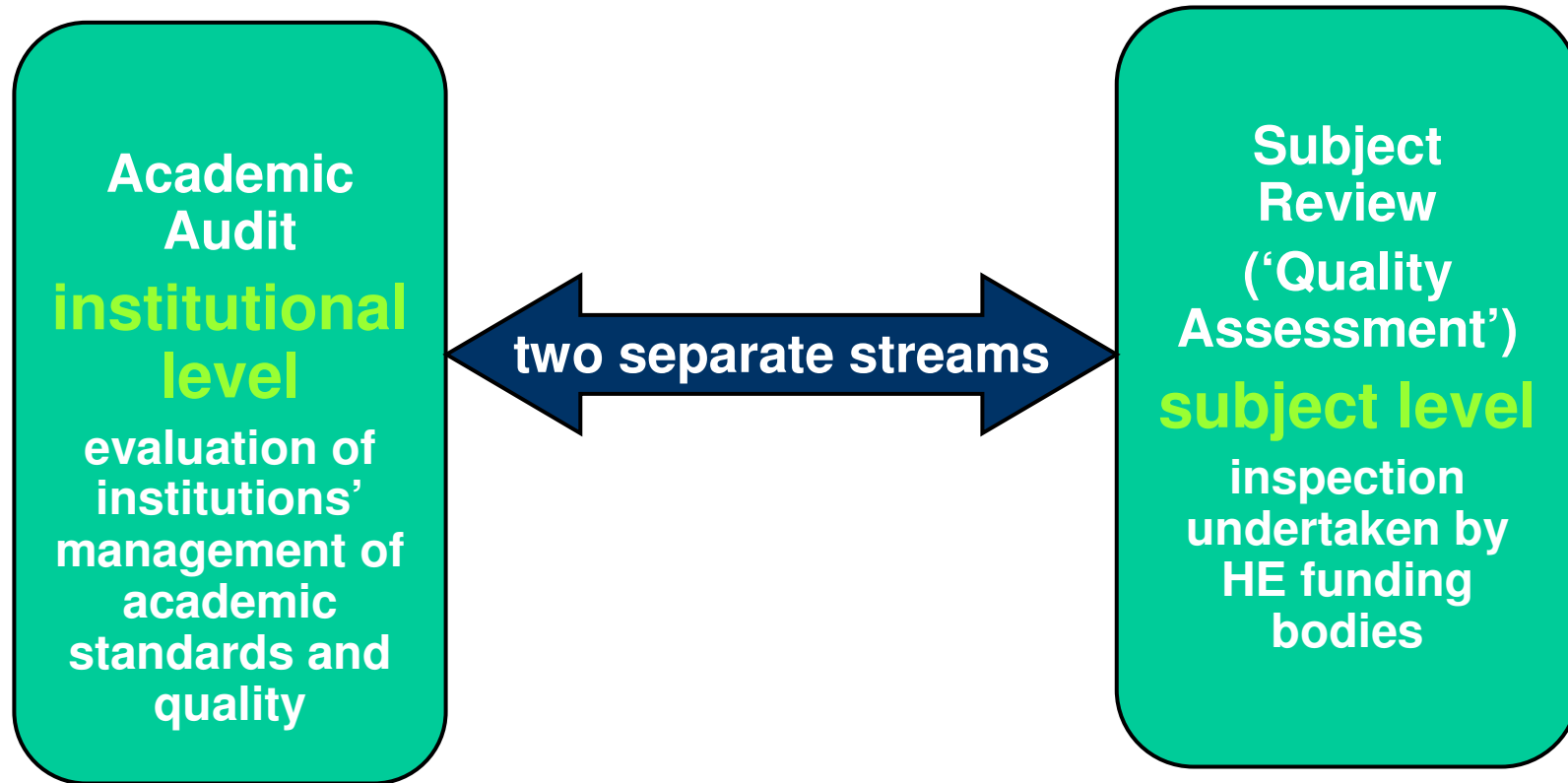
What are we trying to do in QAA?

λ a number of things:

- provide a guarantee of threshold standards for UK awards
- protect the public interest
- identify and promote good practice
- help reduce not-so-good practice
- help institutions to strengthen their own self-regulation
- provide a valid basis for the reputation of UKHE



Quality assurance in the UK 1990-2001



What replaced subject review?

**'institutional
audit'**

**institutional
level**

**evaluation of
institutions'
management of
academic
standards and
quality**

Analysis

	Institutional Audit	Subject Review
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• responsibility lies with institution – retains autonomy• encourages internal QA• cost effective• less burdensome• more acceptable to academic community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• focus on point of delivery• level of info useful to public• influences academic behaviour• raise 'grass roots' awareness of quality• strong central control
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• no specific assurance at programme/subject level• limited useful info to public• relies on strong internal QA• engages administrators more than academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• expensive and time consuming• resented by community• reduces trust and autonomy• limited time value of outcomes• encourages game playing• discourages innovation

Audit is a conversation....

“those who are accountable give an account of their activities to appropriately experienced persons who assess the evidence, test the accuracy of the account, and produce a report”



Principles of audit

- it assumes institutions are best placed to provide stakeholders information about their academic standards and quality
- it accepts that public needs credible, independent and rigorous scrutiny of institutions
- it encourages institutions to be self-evaluative
- it offers opportunities for enhancement

Principles of audit

- it is an evidence-based process
- it is conducted by peer review
- it places an emphasis on students and their learning

6 basic quality assurance questions

- λ what are you trying to do? PURPOSES
- λ why are you doing it? REASON
- λ how are you going to do it? METHOD
- λ why is that the best way to do it? OPTIMISATION
- λ how do you know it works? EFFECTIVENESS
- λ how can you improve it? ENHANCEMENT



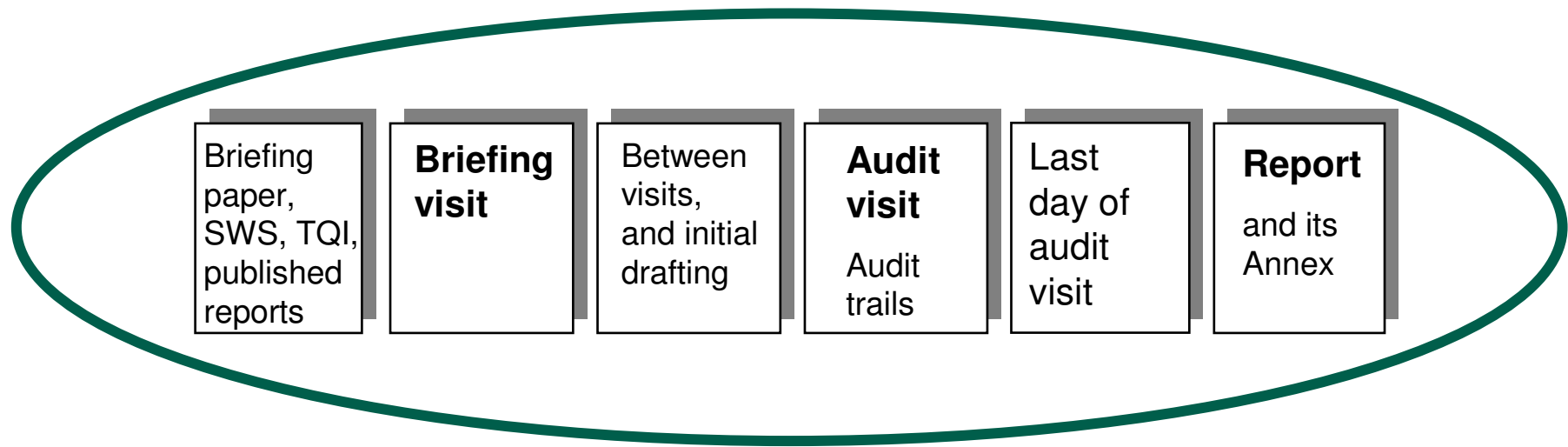
Scope and coverage of audit

- Institutional management of academic standards
- Institutional management of learning opportunities
- Institutional approach to quality enhancement
- Published information

Institutional audit

The Audit Model - Process

- Select panel of peer auditors
- Institutional self-evaluation document
- Student written submission
- Discipline self-evaluation documents
- Briefing visit – read documentation, meet students and senior staff, agree a programme
- Audit visit – read documentation, meet with key players, visit departments
- Report



Institutional audit: Main targets of the Audit

- Overall management of quality and standards
- Management of internal information and communication
- Internal quality assurance reviews
- The experience of students as learners
- The quality assurance of teaching staff (human resources)
- Academic standards –expected and achieved
- The use of external reference points – the academic infrastructure
- Publicly available information on programmes and awards



QAA

Audit trails

Two or three 'audit trails' are selected to demonstrate systems at work

Agreed between the university and the audit team

Two types of audit trail

...

Sampling trails –

- normally based on the institution's own way of managing and reviewing its academic standards and quality of provision
- **Supplementary trails –**
- of particular topics proposed by the institution and accepted by the audit team



QAA

Sampling audit trails

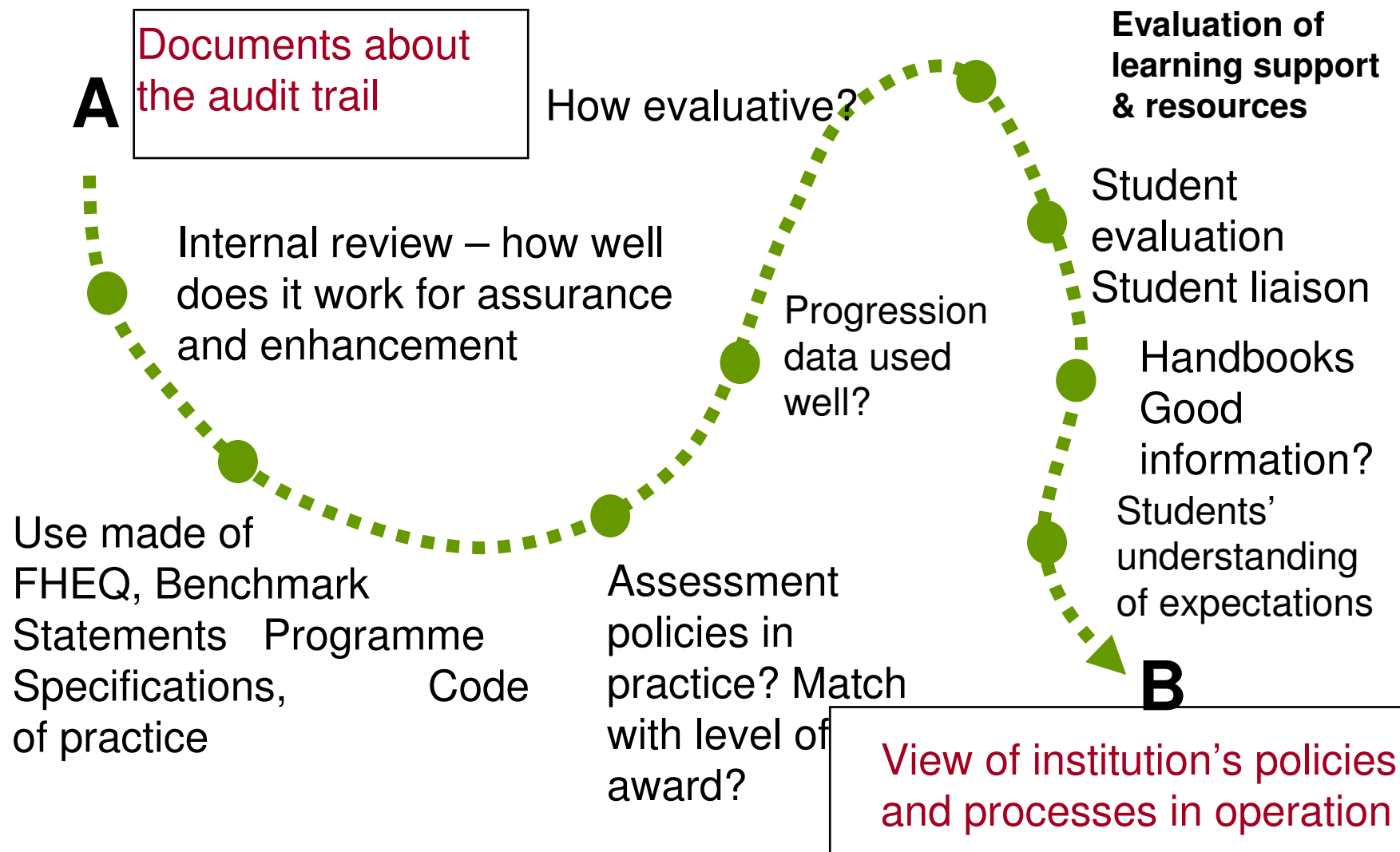
- λ sample the combined effect of an institution's policies and procedures
- λ help the audit team to understand how the institution's approach to the management of quality and academic standards works in practice to the benefit of students and staff
- λ their findings are not reported separately but they contribute to the evidence on which the team draws for



Selection of audit trails

- λ is made by the audit team at the briefing visit, following discussion with the institution
- λ will bear in mind the value added to the audit process by undertaking the trail
- λ will also bear in mind that trails are a means of gathering evidence, not an end in themselves

On the audit trail ...



Institutional audit:

The Experience of Students As Learners

- The student written submission
- Student members of audit teams (2009)
- Feedback from students, graduates and employers; meetings with students
- Learning support resources
- Academic guidance, support and supervision
- Personal support and guidance



The UK's Quality Assurance Frameworks comprise

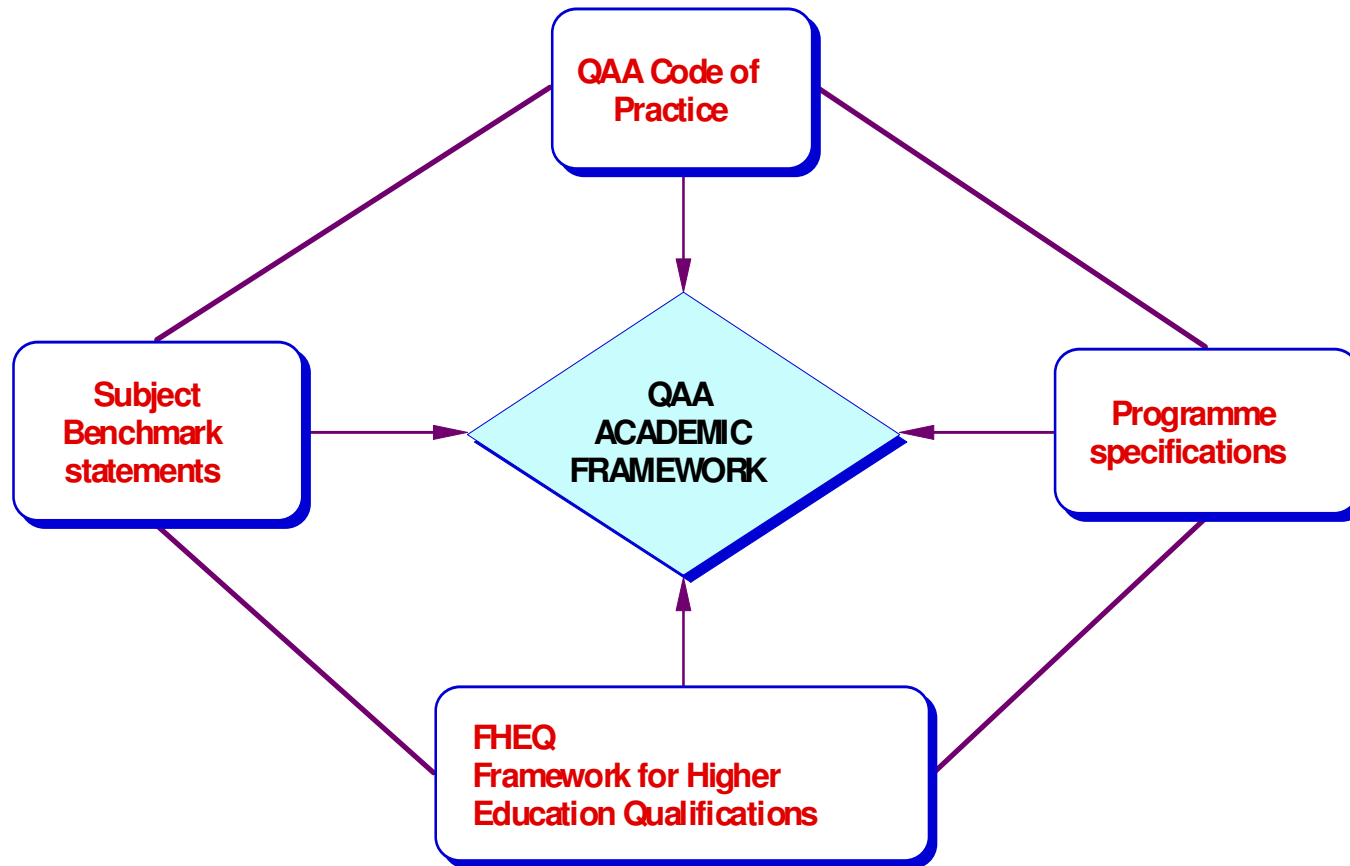
- regular institutional audits
- the 'Academic Infrastructure'
- published information about quality and standards in individual institutions ('Teaching Quality Information' - TQI)
- National student surveys



The 'Academic Infrastructure'

- Reference points for standards and quality
- Two HE qualifications frameworks (England, Wales and Northern Ireland; Scotland)
- Subject benchmark statements
- Programme specifications
- Code of practice for quality assurance
- Not prescriptive but use is reviewed by QAA

UK national academic infrastructure



Quality assurance in the UK: the trajectory, 1993-2008

- From subject review to institutional audit
- From inspection to quality assurance
- From external prescription to internal rigour
- From process to outcome
- From the implicit to the explicit
- From assertion to verified information
- From accountability towards enhancement
- From suspicion towards trust



What the UK has learnt about quality assurance (PW):

- Only providers can assure quality
- Purpose should determine process
- Evolve, don't repeat
- Move from the specific to the generic
- Work with the grain of academic life, not against it
- Less is more
- Quality is expensive
- Quality assurance is not the answer to all problems



Some tips for institutions...quality assurance

- Work at the local level – subjects first
- Involve departmental and faculty managers – integrate the systems
- Simple but effective is best
- Aim for consistency
- Promote the benefits for staff and students
- Recognise and reward good practice
- Avoid heavy documentation and ‘gold plating’
- It takes time – don’t rush it....

Some tips for institutions (audits)

- Be honest – show strengths and admit difficulties – self-understanding is the key
- Ensure staff and students understand the process
- Demonstrate ‘strategic overview’
- Trust your expert peers
- Try to make it normal not ‘special’ – everyday not a special event
- Prepare case studies for audit

The motto of institutional audit

“Inspect yourself – Protect yourself”



Thank you

