



Heythrop College, University of London

Institutional audit

March 2011

Annex to the report

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Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited Heythrop College (the College) from 28 February to 4 March 2011 to carry out an Institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the learning opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards the College offers on behalf of the University of London.

Outcomes of the Institutional audit

As a result of its investigations, the audit team's view of Heythrop College is that:

- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards that it offers on behalf of the University of London
- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The College has adopted a systematic approach to the appraisal and enhancement of the quality of students' learning opportunities across all levels of the institution. This approach is outlined in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook and led through the deliberative structures - notably the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Research Committee.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

The audit team found that the College's arrangements for its postgraduate research students met the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, and were operating as intended.

Published information

The audit team found that reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information the College publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas of good practice:

- extensive use of externality in the management and development of College processes (paragraph 27)
- innovation in teaching, learning and assessment contained in the Foundation Degree in Pastoral Mission (paragraph 90)
- the level of academic and pastoral support for students (paragraph 111)
- the incorporation of visiting lecturers and tutorial assistants as full members of the College community (paragraph 125)

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- regular and organised events that embrace externality to allow good practice to be highlighted and disseminated (paragraph 133).

Recommendations for action

The audit team recommends that the College consider further action in some areas.

Recommendations for action that the team considers advisable:

- ensure the current timetables for the implementation of the levelisation project and periodic reviews are achieved (paragraphs 40 and 66)
- ensure that no current student is disadvantaged by the implementation of the new degree classification system and that any future significant changes to academic regulations are carefully scheduled (paragraph 67).

Recommendations for action that the team considers desirable:

- routinely share external examiner reports with student representatives (paragraph 50)
- ensure revisions to the *Code of practice* are routinely and systematically considered through the College's deliberative structures (paragraph 73)
- reflect upon the planned formal processes for capturing the views and involvement of students in programme development to ensure they are fit for purpose (paragraph 80).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1 Heythrop College (The College) describes itself as 'a place where there is inquiry into truth through the study of philosophy and theology'. The College offers University of London degrees in theology, philosophy and, more recently, combined degrees in these subjects with psychology, and as such has one of the largest numbers of students studying philosophy and theology in one institution in the UK. The College was founded in 1614 by the Society of Jesus in Louvain; it still receives substantial support from the Society and, since 2006-07, also from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). It became a College of the University of London in 1970.

2 Although relatively small in terms of student and staff numbers and academic provision, there is a strong sense of community in terms of collegiality and personal support for both students and staff in the College. Nonetheless, both staff and students have the advantages of being part of a large institution through their relationship with, and access to, the University of London and its resources. These include being part of a wider academic community and access to the shared resources and services of the University, such as Senate House library, the Students' Union, careers and computing services. Students are members of the University of London Students' Union and are able to access federal sporting and social facilities.

3 The College has experienced considerable growth in student numbers over recent years, with staff numbers increasing to support this growth. In the academic year 2009-10, the College had 830 students, of whom 460 were undergraduates, 335 were studying for taught postgraduate degrees and diplomas and 35 were studying for research degrees. Following three years of growth to achieve the HEFCE-allocated funded student numbers, in 2009 the funded student population reached a steady state, with no expectation of further funded numbers.

4 The undergraduate student population is predominantly full-time school-leavers, often living on site, with daytime lectures and classes. Postgraduates are mostly mature students who study part-time in the evening, 40 per cent of whom already have another qualification at master's level.

5 The College has recently grown its taught portfolio at bachelor's and master's level. In an effort to widen participation, the College approved its first Foundation Degree in Pastoral Mission, which commenced in September 2009, and a BA in Abrahamic Religions in 2007. The latter programme reflects the College's commitment to interfaith relations and recruits from a wide ethnic and faith community base. Psychology, introduced as a subject in combination with philosophy and theology in 2006, has recruited steadily and the first cohort completed in 2009. The University of London International Programme (formally the External System) also enables students both overseas and in the UK to access the College's divinity/theology programmes. The external programmes in theology and divinity are outside the remit of this audit. The College has no collaborative arrangements.

6 The College also has around 100 full and part-time academic staff undertaking teaching, research and knowledge transfer/outreach activities, with a wide range of expertise in these subjects; they are supported by 40 professional, administrative and support staff. One special feature of the institution is that some of its academic staff are made available by their religious order for teaching or other purposes at the College. By providing perspectives from a number of orders and faith groups, the College stated that staff with a religious focus support the richness of the student's learning experience.

7 The Mission of the College is:

- to serve society through philosophy and theology
- to offer its students an education marked by intelligence, scholarship and generosity of spirit
- to foster interfaith dialogue
- to be a resource for the Christian faith community
- to provide leadership in Catholic thought.

The information base for the audit

8 The College provided the audit team with a briefing paper and supporting documentation, including that related to the sampling trails selected by the team. The index to the briefing paper was referenced to sources of evidence to illustrate the institution's approach to managing the security of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of its educational provision. The team had a hard copy of all documents referenced in the briefing paper; in addition, the team had access to the institution's intranet.

9 The Students' Union produced a student written submission setting out the students' views on the accuracy of the information provided to them, the experience of students as learners and their role in quality management.

10 In addition, the audit team had access to:

- the report of the previous Institutional audit (2005)
- the report on the mid-cycle follow up to Institutional audit
- Special Review of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes
- the institution's internal documents
- the notes of audit team meetings with staff and students.

Developments since the last audit

11 In response to the findings of the 2005 Institutional audit an action plan was drawn up and monitored by the Academic Standards Committee and the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC). The audit report contained three features of good practice, two advisable and seven desirable recommendations.

12 The three features of good practice were: the composite report of issues raised by external examiners, considered by Academic Board, as an effective vehicle for developing opportunities for enhancement; the effective links between programme monitoring reports and the identification of staff development needs; the ways in which the substantial and recent agenda for change has been achieved both through consensus and the enthusiastic engagement of the College's staff. The audit team recognised that much work had been undertaken in recent years, building on the findings of the previous audit, and that the good practice relating to external examiners' reports and change management was continuing. As a developmental process, the identification of staff development needs is now predominantly managed through individual staff development reviews.

13 The majority of recommendations in the 2005 report have been effectively considered and addressed. A number remain 'open' with ongoing actions and these are referred to below. The audit team considered that the College's engagement with the recommendations was initially slow, but that recent senior staff appointments led to considerable attention being given to effectively addressing the issues raised at the last

audit. This was recognised at the mid-cycle review in 2009 where the conclusion was that 'the College appears to have made good progress in addressing the recommendations of the Institutional audit, November 2005'.

14 During the period since the audit there have been a number of significant developments. As noted above, the College has extended the curriculum by introducing a number of new programmes. The Foundation Degree in Pastoral Mission took the College into a different mode of work-based learning in partnership with the Archdiocese of Westminster. Students are sponsored by their parish to undertake the programme, which is a tripartite provision between the College, diocese and parish. In 2008, as a consequence of the University's decision to end its federal philosophy provision, the BA Philosophy has been brought within the College examination system. This development facilitated the development of the Credit and Assessment Framework as a cross-college framework.

15 The College has begun to adapt its structure and established three academic departments - Pastoral and Social Studies, Philosophy, and Theology - with heads of department who are responsible for staff management and staff resources for teaching and research activities, and for providing support for research students. From 2011-12, programmes will become a departmental responsibility, with modules allocated to a home programme. Research centres and institutes, responsible for leading staff research in specific topics and also knowledge transfer activity, are now embedded in departments.

16 In 2009 the College's site was purchased by the Society of Jesus on a 70 year lease. This has enabled the College to take over responsibility for managing the site and planning future developments. This has led to an enhancement to facilities, including the increase in audio visual technology, redecoration and reconfiguration of some teaching rooms, plus consideration of long-term opportunities to develop the site.

17 There have been a number of other important developments relevant to the management of academic standards and quality and these are considered in more detail below.

Institutional framework for the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities

18 Following revision of the University of London Ordinances in 2008, each constituent body is responsible for the management of the academic standards as well as the quality of learning opportunities of its awards.

19 Academic Board is the main body responsible for the academic work of the College and thus ultimately for the academic standards of its awards. It has oversight of policy and procedures that ensure the safeguarding and monitoring of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. It is assisted in this role by its two sub-committees: LTC and the Research Committee.

20 LTC is responsible for developing and monitoring the policies and procedures that secure academic standards and is the main forum for considering matters relating to student learning opportunities and resources. It has a broader and more developmental remit than its predecessor committee. Its membership was increased to include new categories of staff, including a representative of the tutorial assistants and visiting lecturers. LTC has ownership of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and makes recommendations to Academic Board on, for example, the new Credit and Assessment Framework. LTC aims to develop the College's quality assurance and enhancement systems as they relate to taught programmes, to assess their effectiveness and to ensure that they align with national

benchmarks. As part of its work it uses key performance data, such as progression and completion statistics and the outcomes of the College's student satisfaction survey and the National Student Survey. The Committee is chaired by the Director of Learning and Teaching; the Deans of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies and the President of the Students' Union are also members. The Staff Student Liaison Committee is a forum for the exchange of information and for students to raise points for consideration. Chaired by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, its membership includes at least one student from each programme, the Students' Union President and a member of the Union Executive. Heythrop College staff members include the Principal, the Director of Learning and Teaching, the Director of Administration, the Undergraduate Administrator, and the Quality and Research Coordinator (QARC). Meetings are held once per term and minutes and agenda are available via HELIOS, the College's virtual learning environment.

21 A significant recent development is the appointment of heads of department and the allocation of modules and programmes to the three departments. The heads of department will be required to manage staff and resources. At the time of the audit visit, programmes and modules were being allocated to the three departments and they will become fully operational from the start of 2011-12. As part of this process each module will be allocated to a home programme, so modules will become the responsibility of departments too. It is intended that this will enable any issues regarding the quality of provision to be addressed more effectively through the academic line management system, and link teaching activities more closely with the workload planning role of heads of department. It should also enable departments to plan their academic portfolio more effectively, for example identifying modules where there may be academic overlap and recommending closure of modules identified as no longer required. In future each programme will be managed by a programme convenor.

22 There are five research centres or institutes, of which four were formed in the past two years; each resides in a named department. The College recognises that these recent changes necessitate increased support for heads of department in order to manage their additional responsibilities.

23 The key quality assurance processes including approval, monitoring and review are described in the College's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. These processes are supported by the QARC and the Director of Administration. In recent years there has been a concerted effort, driven by Directors and the QARC and managed through LTC, to align or demonstrate existing alignment of College processes with the Academic Infrastructure and to enhance processes within the College. This has led to considerable change, which was a focus for this audit team and is referred to throughout this report.

24 In February 2010 a periodic review was halted when the panel concluded that the review procedures lacked clarity. The College responded by initiating a full review of its programme approval, monitoring and review processes against *Section 7 of the Code of practice*. The review was conducted by an external consultant. The report of the review, which was made available to the audit team, resulted in a revision of procedures for monitoring and review. The revised processes are considered below.

25 The Principal is supported by a Vice-Principal and the Senior Management Team comprising the Director of Administration and Clerk to the Governing Body, the Director of Finance and the Librarian and Acting Director of Estates. The Academic Management Team includes, in addition to Senior Management Team members, the Deans of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies, the heads of department and the Directors of Research and Learning and Teaching. Both strategic and management issues are considered and discussed at Academic Management Team and Senior Management Team, and projects may be initiated for development and submission through the committee structure.

26 In 2005 the College was advised to identify a person who could sustain the momentum already established in developing quality assurance systems, and to drive the quality and standards agenda. There have been a number of appointments since the last audit, including Directors of Learning and Teaching, Administration and Research and the QARC. The post-holders have clearly led many of the developments that have occurred in the College's management of academic standards and quality of learning opportunities since the last audit. The Director of Learning and Teaching chairs the LTC, while the Director of Research chairs the Research Committee.

27 The audit team noted that the College has made extensive and effective use of external input into both the design and review of its processes for the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Staff external to the College have been involved in thematic audits, are members of key committees, have produced reports analysing National Student Survey results and other specially commissioned reports plus staff development sessions (see paragraphs 24, 64, 94, 96, 105 and 123). The team considered this extensive use of externality in the management and development of College processes as a feature of good practice.

28 In order to assure the University of London of the security of quality and standards, the College submits to it an annual report. The audit team read the most recent available reports for 2008-09 and 2009-10 and was of the view that they were comprehensive and reflective accounts. A separate annual report on research degrees is also sent to the University of London.

29 The audit team were of the view that the College's framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities is effective.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

30 The College's programme approval, monitoring and review processes consider both the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Accordingly, they are considered together in this report.

Programme approval

31 Approval of a new programme is a three stage process. Proposers are encouraged to have discussions with the Dean of Undergraduate or Postgraduate Studies, the Director of Learning and Teaching and the Quality and Research Coordinator (QARC). Proposals for new programmes are considered by the Academic Management Team, which determines whether or not the proposal is consonant with mission and ethos of the College and, if so, whether adequate resources are available. Following the agreement of the Academic Management Team that adequate resources will be available, the proposal is then developed by a team. It is during this stage that reference should be made to the *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and relevant subject benchmark statements. There follows an approval event which is required to have external membership on the approval panel. The resulting approval report is submitted to the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) for consideration and a recommendation for approval made to Academic Board where final, formal authority rests for approving a programme.

32 The audit team scrutinised documentation and reports from a number of approval events and noted that the approval panels had external membership. The events had given due consideration to: assessment; the curriculum, including transferable skills; the student experience and links to research interests of staff. Reports of approval events seen by the team showed clear evidence that consideration had been given to learning resources, including staff resources, library facilities, IT facilities and the quality of the student handbook. Documentation consulted during the approval events explained the rationale for the programmes. A comprehensive draft student handbook was also part of the documentation seen. Conditions were set at the approval events and fulfilment of these was tracked by LTC. The team concluded that the approval process was robust and fit for purpose.

Annual monitoring

33 Central to the current process of annual monitoring are the teachers' meetings for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, which serve as a forum for discussion for all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The meetings, to which all academic staff are invited, have a wide-ranging agenda, including issues raised by: external examiners; assessment; conduct of examination boards; student feedback (see paragraph 76), including the National Student Survey results; and improving communication. In addition, the team noted that minutes, and subsequent actions were not attributable to specific programmes. The College has recognised this lack of programme focus and stated in the briefing paper that 'it has increasingly been felt that the programme-level identity and overview requires strengthening'. The team concur with this sentiment. Reports of the teaching meetings are considered at LTC.

34 A new process for annual monitoring was being piloted in 2010-11 and is described fully in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook . As part of the enhancement to the annual monitoring process, the College has recognised the need for a clearer and more robust approach to the provision and use of programme data. The briefing paper stated that the College 'recognises that it has to develop a more comprehensive and coherent analytical approach to the use of data for the management of quality and standards'. The audit team noted from scrutiny of the current method of annual monitoring that, for example, progression data for some programmes was available and that classification data was completely absent. The team also noted that the College was currently working on the systematic production of data sets which will include analysis of admissions, progression and completion data for the revised monitoring process.

35 The new process requires that each programme convenor completes an annual report, based on a template, with the aim of providing an evaluation of the operation of a programme or group of related programmes during the previous academic year. The audit team considered the format and headings of the template to be appropriate and that the pilot report was a thorough and comprehensive document. The team noted that the annual programme monitoring reports are scheduled for consideration by LTC towards the end of the spring term. Given that the annual report relates to the previous academic year, the team would encourage the College to reconsider the timing of central consideration of annual programme monitoring reports so that any pertinent issues may be actioned in an expeditious manner.

Periodic review

36 The College's periodic review process is designed to ascertain whether or not programmes are continuing to meet University of London and College requirements, and are

fit for purpose in that they continue to support students to meet the programme learning outcomes. The process also seeks assurance that programmes meet the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure, including the FHEQ and programme specifications. In 2010, as part of a wider review, the periodic review process was redesigned. There has been one periodic review using the revised process.

37 The audit team read documentation related to both 'old' and 'new' style periodic reviews. The 'old' style review reports provided evidence of input from the student body and recent graduates. Previous external examiners' reports were included in the documentation requirements along with statistics on progression and achievement. Periodic review documents seen by the team gave consideration to the learning resources available and confirmed their adequacy. The team considered the 'old' style process as fit for the purpose of securing academic standards and assuring the quality of provision.

38 Documentation for the revised review method includes a self-evaluation document, setting out details of the curriculum and programme delivery and a summary of the outcomes of student consultations. Programme and module specifications, and statistics on progression and classification, were also part of the documentation. The audit team saw the report relating to the one periodic review to date using the revised process and noted that the panel, including external membership and student union representation, considered the documentation and met with staff and students to explore issues in some detail. The outcome of the review was presented as a detailed report to LTC with final approval of the outcomes resting with Academic Board. LTC minutes confirmed that all conditions of the review had been met prior to the start of the new programme cohort. The audit team considered the revised process to be rigorous and appropriate.

39 Reports resulting from both 'old' and 'new' style periodic reviews are considered by LTC, from where a recommendation may be made to Academic Board for the re-approval of the provision. Any conditions of re-approval must be met before the provision is reapproved. Having examined periodic review documentation of both 'old' and 'new' methods, the audit team were satisfied that both methods made a significant contribution to the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of provision.

40 College processes require that a programme is reviewed every five years. The audit team noted that the schedule for periodic reviews had been subject to significant slippage in recent years. There were a number of reasons for this slippage, including senior management intervention. Given the introduction of a revised method and the importance of periodic review as a mechanism for securing academic standards and assuring the quality of learning opportunities, the team advises the College to ensure that the current timetable for periodic review is achieved.

41 Given the recent changes to annual programme monitoring and periodic review, the audit team would encourage the College to reflect and formally evaluate these processes to ensure their effective implementation. The team were of the view that the processes of programme approval, annual monitoring and periodic review were effective in securing the standards and the quality of learning opportunities of the awards made by the College.

External examiners

42 The College's approach to external examining is described in its Handbook for External and Intercollegiate Examiners. It contains a description of the criteria for appointment, responsibilities and duties of external examiners. The team found this to be a thorough and useful document which reflected the *Code of practice, Section 4*.

43 In addition to the Handbook, external examiners are provided with an induction event at the College. They have a dedicated section of the virtual learning environment, HELIOS, where relevant information and forms, and draft examination papers can be accessed. The team reviewed the information made available to external examiners and considered that it was comprehensive and accessible.

44 For postgraduate provision, external examiners are appointed to a programme. For undergraduate provision, external examiners are appointed to a cluster of related modules or a subject area. Additionally, since 2009-10, some undergraduate external examiners are appointed to a programme.

45 The audit team learnt that, following a pilot of appointing external examiners at programme level, LTC is likely to recommend the rolling out of programme level external examiners across all undergraduate programmes. The audit team noted that the External and Intercollegiate Handbook states 'The primary responsibility of an external examiner is to ensure that the standard of the programme of study offered at the College is appropriate for the award concerned; that the standard is consistent with the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications'. The team would therefore encourage the College to pursue its intention of allocating an external examiner to each undergraduate programme of study.

46 Nominations for the role of external examiner need to be from 'persons whose seniority, experience and expertise in their field inspire confidence that they can contribute with authority and impartiality to assuring comparability of standards and fairness to students'. The head of department, liaising with programme staff, passes the completed nomination form, via the QARC, to the LTC, who, acting on behalf of Academic Board, has authority to appoint. The Director of Learning and Teaching, as Chair of LTC, may take chair's action and appoint also. The audit team noted that the centrally managed list of external examiner appointments of College staff is also maintained so that reciprocity may be guarded against.

47 The report pro forma used by external examiners was considered by the audit team and viewed as a thorough and useful framework by which external examiners can comment on the standards and quality of the College's provision. The team scrutinised several external examiners' reports and found them to be generally positive, comprehensive and constructive.

48 Reports from external examiners are received centrally and then distributed to relevant staff. Responses to external examiners' reports come from two sources. Generic college-level issues are responded to by the QARC. Issues at a programme or subject level are responded to by relevant academic staff. The current process, as described in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook, does not require any central monitoring of subject-level responses to external examiners' reports. The audit team learnt that some programme convenors send copies of subject-level responses to the QARC. However this is not currently a systematic requirement.

49 Two summaries of external examiners' reports, one for undergraduate and one for postgraduate provision, are prepared annually for LTC. The Committee produces an action plan to address any generic issues. Both the overview reports and action plans are received by Academic Board, although LTC is responsible for monitoring progress of the action plan. The audit team saw copies of both undergraduate and postgraduate overview reports and action plans and found these to be thorough and comprehensive documents. An overview of external examiners' reports and the main pertinent generic issues raised are also contained within the annual report from the College to the University of London.

50 Current practice within the College is that students do not have access to the external examiners' reports, although they do have access to the overview reports via student membership of LTC and Staff Student Liaison Committee. The audit team heard that the College was intending to publish external examiners' reports online and that the College did not object to this in principle. The audit team considers it desirable that the College routinely shares the full external examiner reports with student representatives.

51 From the evidence available to it, the audit team concluded that the College makes strong and scrupulous use of independent external examiners in the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

52 Programme approval and review events are required to make reference to the FHEQ and relevant subject benchmark statements. The audit team saw evidence that this occurs in a rigorous manner and reference to these documents is appropriately noted in the specifications. Outside of approval processes, amendments to programme specifications require the approval of LTC, coordinated by the QARC as committee secretary. The QARC is also responsible for distributing revised subject benchmark statements to programme convenors for comment. The team concluded that the College's programme specifications adequately described the programme level outcomes, assessment strategy and standard of each award. As such they were a clear and useful source of information for both staff and students.

53 Programme specifications seen by the team clearly showed the intended learning outcomes for knowledge, intellectual and cognitive skills, and practical and transferable skills, together with the strategy for the assessment of these learning outcomes. The programme specifications also showed the structure of the programme. As programme specifications are part of the documentation required for validation, the University is able to monitor the completeness, accuracy and appropriateness of these documents.

54 The College recently revised its programme specifications to reflect the drive to more explicitly levelise its undergraduate provision. As these documents are central to the College's programme approval and review processes, the changes were a necessary precursor to implementation of the revised Credit and Assessment Framework. During meetings it became apparent to the audit team that there was a low level of awareness as to the purpose of the Academic Infrastructure amongst academic staff. Consequently, staff could not express how the FHEQ related to the College's Credit and Assessment Framework, or how it might influence the ongoing levelisation project (see paragraphs 65-66).

55 At the time of the audit, the College had 18 active Erasmus partnerships and approximately 20 students from Europe study with them in any one year. As such, the context of the Bologna Process was understood by the College, as were the implications of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.

56 The College does not operate programmes that are accredited by professional bodies although they do offer advice and guidance to those who might wish to pursue employment that requires an award from an accredited course. For example, the programme specifications for the BA in Psychology and Philosophy and the BA in Psychology and Theology offer advice regarding recommended future study for students who may wish to take up a career in psychology upon completing their studies.

57 While there was a low level of awareness amongst certain staff members regarding the purpose of the Academic Infrastructure, this had been recognised by the College and was being appropriately addressed at the time of the audit visit (see paragraph 73). The team concluded that the College engaged effectively with the standards infrastructure and other external reference points in setting and clarifying the standards of its awards.

Assessment policies and regulations

58 The 'assessment element' of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy was revised following the Thematic Audit of Assessment. The Strategy, which applies only to undergraduate provision, is available on the College website. It sets out, in broad terms, the principles that the College applies to its assessment processes. The document stresses the link between learning outcomes and assessment, and states that all elements of summative assessment are compulsory.

59 The College provides guidance on assessment to undergraduate students via the Guide to Assessment: Undergraduate Programmes 2010-11. The audit team found this to be a comprehensive document in which commonly used assessment tariffs, method of determination of pass or fail of a module, regulations regarding extensions and classification method are all explained clearly. The generic college-wide assessment criteria are included. The team heard from students that they found such general assessment criteria of limited value, preferring to be guided by the individual criteria provided by module tutors.

60 A Postgraduate Student Handbook, available on the College intranet site, contains information on assessment, including extensions, deferred assessment and generic assessment criteria. For details of assessments, students are referred to the programme and module handbooks. Postgraduate student handbooks seen by the audit team contained clear descriptions of the assessment requirements.

61 The moderation policy for taught postgraduate students requires that end of year essays and all dissertations are double marked, with samples available for scrutiny by external examiners. For undergraduate students the team learnt that moderation takes place in module teams on a sampling basis. The College may wish to integrate the moderation policy into their assessment regulations rather than have it as a separate stand-alone policy.

62 Assessment results are considered at either the undergraduate or postgraduate board of examiners where external examiners are present. A pre-board is held before the main board, the main function of which is to resolve any issues and consider mitigating circumstances before presentation of results to the formal board of examiners. Currently student achievement for all undergraduate programmes is considered at one board of examiners, held in the summer term, to which all external examiners are invited. Staff reported that this arrangement had become unwieldy due to the growth in student numbers and the number of programmes that are now taught. Senior staff stated that the College would be moving to hold boards of examiners centred on a cluster of programmes or a subject area.

63 The College is also considering streamlining the membership of boards of examiners and ending the current practice whereby all academic staff are eligible to attend. The board of examiners is currently operating under the terms of reference as used by University of London boards. Given the anticipated changes in the membership of the board of examiners and the move towards programme-based external examiners, the team encourage the College to develop a formally documented constitution and terms of reference of the board of examiners.

64 The conduct of the Undergraduate Board of Examiners attracted some critical comments from external examiners in 2008-09. The College responded by instigating the Thematic Audit of Assessment conducted by an external consultant. Arising from the Audit, the College has appointed an external consultant as observer to the Board of Examiners for Undergraduate Awards with the aim of advising the College on ways in which the practices of the Board could be enhanced. The team regarded this as a further example of the use made of externality to help the College with its management of change.

65 The recommendations of the Thematic Audit of Assessment have led to an action plan which is monitored by LTC. These include the introduction, in September 2010, of a Credit and Assessment Framework, incorporating a levelisation project. The levelisation project relates to a 2005 audit report recommendation that the College review achievement of students who are jointly taught in level 2/3 modules (now level 5/6) in order to ensure that the College's approach aligns with standard sector practice on progression and achievement. The main purpose of the levelisation project is to ensure clear differentiation of learning outcomes and assessment criteria between modules at levels 5 and 6. This will end the current practice whereby some modules at these levels had the same learning outcomes and a common assessment.

66 The audit team learnt of the College's intention that differentiation of levels 5 and 6 would apply to students from 2011-12 and that significant preparatory work had already been undertaken, including some staff development sessions and completion of work on the level 4 modules. The team heard that staff and students were fully conversant with the project and its implications. However, work of a crucial nature for the project which could have the potential to put academic standards at risk was still outstanding. Indeed, some further scheduled staff development sessions had yet to take place, and there were no examples of modules where differentiation had been completed. Given the pivotal nature of the work in the assurance of standards, the team advises the College to ensure that the current timetable for the implementation of the levelisation project is achieved.

67 The Thematic Audit of Assessment also included a recommendation to review the method of calculating classification. The audit team heard that the College recognised that the current method of calculating classification was no longer fit for purpose under the new Credit and Assessment Framework and that there was a need to revise it. The team learnt that work was progressing with the new classification method and that this would be implemented from 2012-13. The College's intention is that the new classification method, whatever it may be, will apply to students currently in their first year of study (2010-11). The College intends to inform current students of the new method by a variety of means, including writing to each affected student. The team advises the College to ensure that no current student is disadvantaged by the implementation of the new degree classification system and that any future significant changes to academic regulations are carefully scheduled.

Management information - statistics

68 The briefing paper stated that the provision of comprehensive data on student achievement remains a priority for development. Staff whom the audit team met explained that the staff resource available to support the development of management information systems had been limited, but that recently an additional member of staff had been appointed to the relevant section.

69 Minutes of previous undergraduate teachers' meetings, which incorporate annual monitoring, showed little evidence of routine and systematic consideration of programme data. At the time of the audit work was progressing to provide full data sets to support the

new annual monitoring process to be introduced in 2011-12. The audit team saw examples of the data reports considered by the Undergraduate Teachers Meeting in January that will be used in the new annual monitoring process. These reports showed clearly the statistics for enrolment, progression, withdrawal, repeats and completion on a programme basis. Classification data over a five-year period for each programme was also available. The team recognised the improvements in the provision of data that the College is currently working on. Data on admissions and cohort progression is already available on a programme basis. As part of periodic review, data reports on applications, admissions, progression, withdrawals and classification is routinely provided in a clear and easily understood format.

70 Central support supplies all necessary data for key committees and boards such as boards of examiners and LTC. Academic staff can request specific information and are able to interrogate the student records system to see the progress of individual students. LTC is able to consider classification data over an extended period for the purposes of comparison. The audit team saw this classification data for the entire student population, tracked over a five-year period, as well as classification on a departmental basis. The team found that the classification data was presented in a thorough, accessible and meaningful way which facilitated comparisons and identification of trends in achievement. Externally commissioned reports provide comprehensive analysis of National Student Survey data, and identify strengths and areas for improvement. These reports are debated at LTC.

71 The audit team was of the view that the College's systematic use of statistical management information and the data contributes to the assurance of academic standards.

72 Overall, the audit team concluded that confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards that it offers on behalf of the University of London.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

73 The Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) has responsibility for ensuring that the College's systems for quality assurance and enhancement are aligned with the Academic Infrastructure, including the *Code of practice*. The audit team noted that when the College reviewed its processes it did so with appropriate reference to the *Code of practice*. However, it was less clear how the College uses its deliberative structures, and in particular LTC, to routinely review its processes for alignment when sections of the *Code of practice* are revised. The 2005 Institutional audit recommended that the College 'formalise the loci of responsibility for the oversight of the sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic standards in higher education (Code of practice)* with appropriate timescales and reporting lines'. In light of this recommendation, the team heard from staff that when sections of the *Code of practice* are revised an exercise is undertaken by the Quality and Research Coordinator (QARC). This involves consulting with relevant officers in order to map existing processes against the revised *Code of practice*. However, if no action is required then no formal report to LTC is made identifying that a revision of the *Code of practice* has been received or that its alignment has been reviewed. The team considered that transparent engagement with the *Code of practice* between reviews was not evident and that it was desirable that the College ensure revisions to the *Code of practice* are routinely and systematically considered through the College's deliberative structures.

74 Overall, the audit team considered that the College makes effective use of the *Code of practice* in the management of the quality of learning opportunities.

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

75 See section 2.

Management information - feedback from students

76 Student feedback is gained in several ways. At module level, students complete paper-based module evaluation questionnaires for each module studied. The 2005 Institutional audit report recommended that the College 'ensure that all module evaluations are disclosed, critically analysed and incorporated effectively into the annual monitoring process'. The College stated that all module evaluations are now considered by the module tutor, who produces an overview report which is sent to the QARC. The QARC reviews them, provides a copy for the programme convenor to be used in the production of the Annual Programme Review report, and produces an overview report for discussion of generic themes at the relevant teachers' meeting. Module evaluations normally remain confidential to the module tutor and occasions when they may be made more public, for example seen by the head of department, are articulated in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. The College is currently consulting on future use of these evaluations. Senior staff indicated to the audit team that use of evaluations will be strengthened through a revised annual monitoring process which is being introduced in 2010-11 and includes commentary by the programme convenor on student feedback through module evaluation questionnaires. The process is conducted between the tutor and student and, while the team welcomed the use now made of module evaluation data, it encourages the College, in its review of the administration of the process, to consider introducing a method by which analysis and summary of module evaluations are independent of the module teacher.

77 Students also contribute to occasional topic based surveys which are usually linked to future developments, such as the library survey which informed the Strategic Review of the Library in 2008-09.

78 The College participates in the National Student Survey (NSS) and plans to participate in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey in future. NSS data is analysed and presented in report form to LTC, governors, the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC), and actions taken to address points raised. The audit team considered the external reports to be thorough and comprehensive. LTC set up a sub group to take forward issues arising from scrutiny of the 2010 NSS results, and action was taken with particular reference to issues arising in psychology, including extending the embedded piloting of Heythrop Scholar Programme into psychology for 2010-11. The reports are also provided as evidence to programme reviews and themed audits. The Students' Union played an important role in the campaign to achieve 66 per cent returns for the NSS. In 2009-10 overall satisfaction was above the benchmark score of 4 and teaching achieved the highest results. In some areas the scores were marginally lower than in 2008-09, and further analysis was being undertaken at the time of the audit visit. The lower scores related to feedback on assessment and changes are being made for 2010-11 following the Themed Audit of Assessment.

Role of students in quality assurance

79 The briefing paper stated that students or their representatives are involved in all elements of the College's quality assurance process, including programme approval, monitoring and review of programmes, and themed audits. In 2010 the College agreed to fund, for the first time, a full-time paid sabbatical post of President of the Heythrop Students' Union. The President is a member of major College committees, including Governing Body, Academic Board, LTC and SSLC, and liaises closely with College senior management on a formal and informal basis. The College published 'Making yourself heard' in August 2010; this is a document which effectively informs students about the revised arrangements for student representation and provides advice on feeding back to the College at a number of different levels.

80 The 2005 Institutional audit report considered it desirable for the College 'to standardise student representation at undergraduate programme level'. In response to this, and as part of the move to programmes more generally, in 2010 the College introduced programme level representatives. The programme representatives are members of SSLC. The audit team learnt that, although the role of the network of programme representative has yet to be fully defined, the creation of the role has generally been welcomed by students, giving them a formal opportunity to get their voice heard. The Students' Union is responsible for recruiting and training student representatives (and other committee members) for their role, including an induction by the Director of Administration and the QARC. The audit team considered that the training provided was generally sound. The team learnt that the plans to strengthen programme level student representation have not yet been detailed sufficiently in relation to how programme representatives might contribute to the preparation and consideration of annual monitoring reports or how they will liaise with programme convenors in the absence of programme level meetings. Uncertainty on detailed arrangements for programme level representation is also reflected in discussions that have taken place in SSLC, in relation to whether each programme's cohort would be represented on the committee. These uncertainties, along with the concerns expressed above with regard to the use made of the module evaluation questionnaire feedback (see paragraph 76), led the team to consider it desirable that the College reflect upon the planned formal processes for capturing the views and involvement of students in programme development to ensure they are fit for purpose.

81 Postgraduate taught and research students opted not to have formal SSLC meetings as many of them are part-time and find extra attendance at College a problem. Instead, the College holds an annual feedback forum and social event for postgraduate students. The audit team learnt that these students were supportive of arrangements, especially since they considered that individual queries or complaints to the relevant staff member resulted in appropriate responses and action.

82 Students or their representatives have been involved in a number of other quality assurance mechanisms. A student was a full member of the periodic review panel for the BA in Philosophy, Religion and Ethics in 2010. Students have also been panel members of recent themed audits on, for example, admissions and assessment.

83 The student written submission concluded that the main message it wanted to convey was that as a small institution the College is a 'unique community, dedicated to solving problems, mainly philosophical, but happily also administrative!' The audit team consistently heard this message when talking to students it met, noting that while there are formal mechanisms for capturing the student voice these were less often used than the informal mechanisms that were in abundance and helped shaped the culture of the College.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

84 One of the aims of both the 2010-14 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and the 2009-14 Research Strategy is: 'to foster the integration of research and teaching', including through the development of programmes that reflect staff research activity. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy Development Priorities for 2010-11 include the consideration of staff research expertise in programme approval and review events.

85 Academic staff who are involved in teaching are encouraged by the sabbatical system to ensure that their research and scholarly activities inform the development of the curriculum. Academic Board reviews the use made of the sabbatical period, although the sabbatical holders' reports tend to focus on the research activity itself, rather than the planned curriculum links.

86 The audit team learnt that any optional modules directly reflect the research interests of the module teacher. Other than for the Foundation Degree in Pastoral Mission, recent programme approval and review reports seen by the audit team clearly specify the links between staff research activity, the research centres, and the curriculum. To strengthen this expectation, there are plans for the revised periodic programme review process to formally specify that research or scholarly activity must be considered as part of the review process. Students and staff with whom the audit team met were clear about the ways in which staff research activity shapes the curriculum at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and of the ways in which discussion with students, in turn, can influence the research of staff.

87 Overall, the audit team considers that there are effective arrangements for maintaining links between research or scholarly activity, teaching and students' learning opportunities.

Other modes of study

88 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy includes the aim to 'continue to develop flexible provision of learning opportunities in response to the needs of the wider community, including through the use of technology and off-site learning'. To date this aim has been advanced primarily through development of the work-based Foundation Degree in Pastoral Mission in partnership with the Archdiocese of Westminster, as well as through the development of the virtual learning environment (VLE), HELIOS.

89 Foundation Degree students are sponsored by their parish to undertake the programme within a tripartite arrangement between the College, diocese and parish. The programme was approved using the arrangements laid out in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. At the end of the first year of operation, the programme director reported to LTC that student and external examiner feedback was positive in relation to the work-based nature of the programme, which incorporates assessment methods that are novel to the College, and that achievement levels were very good. Future developments identified include the need to refine the assessment criteria for portfolio-based work and to develop a progression route to honours. Parish-based mentors are supported in their role by an induction session and a mentor's handbook, in addition to tripartite meetings with the student and the college-appointed personal tutor for discussion of assessments. The mentors are not involved in assessment of students.

90 Students on the programme who met the audit team reported that the programme was well organised to support their parish-based learning, with excellent levels of support and effective liaison between the parish-based mentor and personal tutor. Assessments were considered to link well with their practice within the parish, as stipulated during the approval process and as specified in the confirmed programme specification. Although enthusiastic about the opportunity to progress on to an honours programme, based on a similar mode of learning, students who were shortly due to complete the programme told the audit team that they had not yet been advised of the arrangements for any progression route, as it was still subject to approval. Within the context of a College which has identified the need to diversify in this regard, the team considered the innovation in teaching, learning and assessment contained in the Foundation Degree in Pastoral Mission was a feature of good practice.

91 Overall, the audit team considered that the arrangements to manage the quality of students' learning opportunities for the Foundation Degree are effective.

Resources for learning

92 Students have access to both the College library collection and that of the University of London's Senate House library, which is considered a considerable asset by staff and students. The College Librarian is a member of Senior Management Team and there is a Library Committee, with undergraduate and postgraduate student representation, which reports to Academic Board. Its terms of reference are to oversee the management of library policy and activity. The Collection Management Policy seeks to ensure that the library collection is managed in such a way as to achieve the aims of the library within the resources available. The most recent NSS results indicate that student satisfaction with library resources is in line with philosophy and theology subject sector results.

93 Adequacy of resources is checked as part of the process of approving a new programme. The College also responds to comments from external examiners and students regarding the adequacy of resources.

94 A strategic review report on the library provision, commissioned in March 2009 and including student and external input, was considered by the Board of Governors. This review was undertaken in line with the arrangements for quinquennial departmental review specified in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. While the review incorporated external input, the audit team found no evidence that the review made use of external benchmark data. The recommendations included clarification of the relationship between the Library Committee and LTC, the development of a formal acquisitions policy, and the provision of an information literacy skills programme for students. The audit team was shown a paper, due to be considered by Academic Board, that provided an update on each of the actions arising from the review. This report indicated that many, including those listed, had been actioned in part or wholly. A number of items were contingent on available finances and the implementation of the campus development plan.

95 The approved arrangements for annual programme monitoring do not explicitly include a requirement for resources for learning to be considered as a discrete aspect. Scrutiny of SSLC minutes however, confirmed that library issues are considered and that library issues are also discussed at the annual teachers' meetings, for referral to LTC, when necessary. The Library Committee, which includes representation from undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research students, prepares an annual report to Academic Board. The latest annual report reflected some, although not all, of the recommendations arising from the library review. The audit team was, however, shown a paper that was due to be

considered by Academic Board that provided an update on each of the actions arising from the review.

96 Information Services Management is overseen by the Director of Administration. In November 2008, a strategic review of information services was undertaken, and included input from students and external representatives, with a view to ensuring that the service continued to support the College's students and staff during a period of growth in student enrolments within a limited resource base. As with the library review, the review of information services did not appear to be informed by the use of external benchmark data. The report informed the basis of an IT plan.

97 The Communication and Information Strategy Group oversees the development of communication and IT strategies, website development and compliance with legislation. The most recent NSS results indicate that student satisfaction with information services provision is in line with philosophy and theology sector results. A further review is planned for 2011 which will form the basis of a revised IT strategy, taking account of the recently revised Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and Research Strategy. Staff and students with whom the audit team met reported that the information systems were now more reliable, following a period of instability, as a result of recent changes.

98 The provision of accurate information through digital media is considered by the College to be of increasing importance. The student written submission identified communication as the most significant issue of concern for students. HELIOS, the College's VLE, is seen as a key medium for communication for staff and students, and an increasingly important part of the delivery of administrative information to staff and students, for the provision of learning resources, as well as the mechanism for assessment submission, tracking of submission and marks return, online marking and feedback, and for making appointments for tutorials. Electronic provision of such information is considered particularly important in light of the significant proportion of part-time staff and students. The online submission of assessments also facilitates the use of plagiarism detection software.

99 The 2010-11 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy action plan aims to develop the use of HELIOS in student learning further, including preparing an e-learning strategy which is related to wider developments in the use of technology for research, administration, student support and other uses.

100 The audit team heard of the College's approach to encouraging staff to make use of the VLE through a grading system, denoting the type (not quality) of resources and activities available for each module within HELIOS, with a view to providing clear exemplars and motivate staff to make fuller use of it. The grading system also includes a specification of the minimum level of administrative resources that should be hosted within the VLE for 2011-12, and which was reported to be satisfied by approximately 90 per cent of modules at the time of the audit. The audit team noted that one module had satisfied the highest specification, which includes the incorporation of interactive learning opportunities.

101 Staff are also supported in their use of the VLE through development sessions, which are supplemented by continuous guidance, on request, by the Web/IT Manager. Staff indicated to the audit team various ways in which HELIOS had supported their teaching. Students indicated that, while there were variable levels of use of HELIOS by staff, usage and functionality was continually improving, and that this was particularly helpful for part-time students. Students also confirmed that HELIOS was now much more reliable, following a period of network instability in 2009-10, and that its use was well received where resources and activities had been made available. The team considered that the recent development of the VLE as a focus for communication, assessment administration and support for learning has enhanced the College's management of learning opportunities.

102 Overall, the audit team considered that the arrangements by which the provision, allocation and management of learning resources supports the student learning experience are effective.

Admissions policy

103 The terms of reference of LTC have recently been revised to incorporate setting and monitoring of the Admissions Policy, which had previously been overseen by the Admissions Committee. A Governance Review which had recommended this revision also recommended the creation of a practitioner group of admissions tutors for the sharing of good practice, although this had yet to be formed at the time of the audit.

104 Admissions tutors are supported in their role through a comprehensive handbook which covers the key aspects of admissions arrangements related to, for example, admissions considerations when dealing with applicants with disabilities, health concerns and from overseas. The audit team heard from staff and students that the admissions process is well understood and its implementation effective.

105 A Thematic Audit of Admissions, which included external members and student representation, took place in February 2010. It made recommendations in relation to marketing, widening participation, data management, admissions processes, the support of tutors, and the development of a more holistic, longer-term approach to student induction. A review of the admissions action plan was reported to LTC in January 2011.

106 Overall, the audit team considered that the College has effective arrangements for ensuring the consistent implementation of its admissions policy.

Student support

107 The College, often in conjunction with the University of London, offers a comprehensive range of support to enable undergraduate and postgraduate students to reach their full potential at each stage of their academic career. The support available is detailed in the respective student handbooks and on the College's website. The Student Services Centre, set up in 2008-09, aims to provide a one-stop shop for advice and guidance for all students.

108 A distinct aspect of the College's arrangements is the one-to-one tutorials that are offered to every student to augment the written feedback on assessments. These were considered by the students with whom the audit team met to be generally inspiring and rewarding opportunities to discuss their own work, and wider topics, with experts in the field.

109 Arising from the Thematic Audit of Admissions, a project was set up and a project manager appointed to improve the experience and develop support for the transition to higher education for first-year students. The College has worked closely with the Heythrop Students' Union, and has appointed a Student Transition Manager to develop a programme of induction and ongoing study skills support to support the transition to higher education through the Heythrop Scholar Programme. This is a skills based programme of activities delivered across the first two terms, which was introduced during the current session. Available in a generic form for all undergraduate students, it is being piloted in an embedded form in theology and, as a response to NSS analysis, in psychology programmes. Initial reflections are positive from both staff and students, and the intention is to roll this out across all levels in future years. Initial evaluation by College staff is that the programme has been successful and this assessment was supported by those students who had

experienced it. It is envisaged that the Heythrop Scholar Programme will be the main vehicle for personal development planning, by integrating this with employability skills and opportunities such as volunteering and placements, as well as career advice.

110 Postgraduate students are provided with induction sessions at the beginning of the academic year and they can access all the above student support services, including study skills, advice on careers, health, and finance. Aspects of the Heythrop Scholar Programme are also being considered for rolling out to postgraduate students. Postgraduate students with whom the audit team spoke, and who are predominantly studying on a part-time basis, were complimentary about the arrangements in place.

111 Most students seek academic advice from their lecturer and module or programme convenor. In addition each student has a personal tutor for their time at Heythrop. For postgraduate students, their main point of support is the programme convenor. The role of the personal tutor is set out in the comprehensive and high quality Personal Tutor Handbook and in the Undergraduate Student Handbook. Personal tutors are required to meet their students in groups and one-to-one at regular intervals. The full-time students with whom the team met spoke very highly of the personal tutorial system. Students on the Foundation Degree in Pastoral Studies, all of whom already held postgraduate qualifications, indicated that the combined support from module and personal tutors and their mentors was exceptional. The audit team recognised, from discussions, that students at Heythrop had a range of staff whom they could approach for support. The audit team concluded that the level of academic and pastoral support available to Heythrop students was a feature of good practice.

112 A new attendance monitoring system will enable personal tutors access to check the attendance of their tutees. They are also notified if the Student Services Centre is concerned about a student.

113 Student support has also been enhanced through increased counselling provision. During 2009, the College set up a Mental Health Working Group and approved a new Mental Health Policy, the result of which was to double the counselling hours available. There is also a chaplaincy team and students have access to a range of provision for other faiths in the local area.

114 As part of the University of London, Heythrop students have access to one of the biggest careers services in Europe. The University's careers service provides a huge range of online and face to face services. A University of London Careers Advisor offers a service on site, as well as additional targeted events, and students can use the central University service in Bloomsbury.

115 Overall, the audit team considered that the College has effective arrangements in place to support students in their academic development and pastoral care. The team recognised that the nature and size of the institution meant that access to tutors and academic staff enabled an informal support environment to flourish. Students were very complimentary about the institution, its staff, their accessibility and responsiveness to issues and concerns and clearly proud of being a Heythrop student.

Staff support (including staff development)

116 The Human Resources Strategy is overseen by the Staffing Committee, which is a sub-committee of the Board of Governors, and is supported by a Human Resources Manager. The Strategy was under review at the time of the audit. The College's policies and procedures for staff recruitment, selection, appointment, induction, probation and promotion,

in addition to other typical human resources policies, are available on the website. These arrangements are also overseen by the Staffing Committee. These arrangements were, in part, developed following the Institutional audit of 2005 which recommended that it would be desirable for the College to, 'embrace the intentions of "normalisation" in all aspects of its activities in relation to the recruitment, selection and appointment of staff, within the terms of the College's statutes'.

117 The Governors' Staffing Committee has oversight of staff development as part of its responsibilities for the Human Resources Strategy. Since December 2010, LTC has assumed oversight of academic staff development in relation to learning and teaching activities, while support for staff research is routinely reviewed by the Research Committee. The Staff Development Strategy 2010-11 specifies that the responsibility for staff development is shared between the College, line managers, various committees and the individual staff member.

118 At the time of the audit visit in 2010-11 there were 42 full-time academic staff, 38 visiting lecturers and 25 tutorial assistants. Visiting lecturers are responsible for teaching entire or component parts of modules, and for designing and marking assessments, including the provision of feedback. Tutorial assistants are responsible for assessing student work, including the provision of feedback and one to one tutorials.

119 A characteristic of the College is that religious orders or dioceses make available, 'on loan', suitably qualified people to take on an academic role. Following the Institutional audit of 2005 the College has developed a universal approach to the recruitment, selection and appointment of different types of staff.

120 All new staff are provided with guidance notes and a one-day induction programme. Lecturers have a mentor, whereas tutorial assistants are guided by their module convenor. Inexperienced teaching staff, on contracts of at least 0.5 full-time equivalence, are also normally expected to complete an accredited teaching qualification.

121 The Institutional audit of 2005 identified as a feature of good practice, 'the effective links between programme monitoring reports and the identification of staff development needs'. Staff development needs are now identified primarily through individual staff development reviews, which are undertaken on an annual basis for all academic staff on a contract of 0.5 full-time equivalence or greater. The scheme is one that is developmental and, in addition to reflection and objective setting, considers the training needs of the individual. Outcomes from reviews are reported by the head of department to the Academic Management Team. The Director of Learning and Teaching and Director of Research lead staff development planning in support of their respective areas of responsibility.

122 The College operates a developmental peer review system, which was strengthened in September 2010, to ensure that the annual review schedule is consistently and impartially implemented and to facilitate the identification of enhancement opportunities from the review process, while retaining its confidential status and protecting the sensitivities of individual tutors. The audit team heard of plans to revise the form used, so that items arising in relation to staff development needs or the identification of good practice can be forwarded to the Director of Learning and Teaching to inform professional development planning.

123 Pedagogy lunches have been established with the intention of enabling all staff, including visiting lecturers and tutorial assistants, who are paid for their attendance, to discuss teaching and learning developments. Staff who have attended these events report finding them stimulating and welcome the opportunity to discuss new developments and good pedagogic practice in more diversified learning, teaching and assessment strategies.

Topics covered recently include a combination of items of a briefing, consultation and good practice nature, with some external input. There have been recent specific sessions to support the successful completion of the levelisation project and input from the Higher Education Academy subject centre. Feedback from staff was very positive.

124 Other opportunities for staff briefing and consultation include termly open staff meetings. The Principal's Prize was introduced in 2010, using the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme criteria, with a view to enable staff to develop an aspect of learning and teaching, and share those developments with colleagues during a pedagogy lunch.

125 In order to better support the significant contributions that are made by visiting lecturers and tutorial assistants, who are sometimes distant from the College, they now have a representative on LTC. Their work is also supported by the twice-yearly Tutorial Assistant/Visiting Lecturer Forum meetings, chaired by the Director of Learning and Teaching, to provide a forum for peer support, two-way communication of arrangements and associated issues arising. The audit team considered that the efforts to incorporate visiting lecturers and tutorial assistants as full members of the College community to be a feature of good practice.

126 Overall, the audit team concluded that confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

Management information - quality enhancement

127 The College has adopted QAA's definition of enhancement as 'the process of taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities'. The audit team learnt that the enhancement focus affects all aspects of the College, from learning and teaching activities, research, student support and guidance, organisation and processes and the estate. Enhancement has become a more explicit and formalised process for the College in recent years, led mainly through the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) for provision for taught students and by the Research Committee for research students.

128 In 2005 the College was recommended to review how it 'might better achieve collective outcomes from processes which currently have a confidential element, in order to facilitate opportunities for quality enhancement more effectively'. The College has given consideration to making enhancement activities more explicit and centrally led and made significant progress, including the appointment of role holders with specific responsibility for quality enhancement. However, the audit team concluded that the College had been slow to deal with this recommendation with regard to those processes with a confidential element, such as module evaluation questionnaires (see paragraph 76). Nonetheless, as well as formal processes for enhancement, the institution facilitates an informal approach reflecting its comparative size and accessibility of staff across all levels. The team recognised the priority that was given by staff to seeking to improve the student experience and of the collaborative nature of the relationship with the Students' Union.

129 The voice of staff and students is captured within the deliberative structures through relevant membership and through regular reporting. For example, there is a standing agenda item on both the LTC and Research Committee for students to raise particular matters or issues. There is also a standing item on the LTC agenda for the Tutorial Assistant/Visiting Lecturer member to raise any issues, plus the notes of the Tutorial Assistant/Visiting

Lecturer Forum are considered at LTC. The undergraduate and postgraduate teachers' meeting minutes are also considered at LTC and used to inform enhancement activities. The audit team was advised of a number of enhancements and was confident that processes were in place to support enhancement activities.

130 The themed audit process has been a new development for the College to consider strategic areas of their provision. Two were undertaken in 2009, building on the methodology of strategic reviews of the IT provision and the library held previously. The College regards the themed audit process as valuable as it enables themes and issues to be considered at a strategic level with external advice and guidance. Both the Themed Audits of Assessment and of Admissions have been vehicles for significant developments to enhance College policies and procedures. The Themed Audit on Assessment led to the development of the Credit and Assessment Framework and the assessment element of the overarching Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

131 The Themed Audit of Admissions was undertaken in February 2010 and the report was considered by LTC at their March meeting. One of the consequent actions was the development of a Transition to Higher Education Working Group, led by the Student Experience Project Manager, which reported to LTC. One outcome is the Heythrop Scholar Programme (see paragraph 109).

132 The College's development of its virtual learning environment has led to significant changes in the presentation of information and the support of learning, teaching, assessment (including an area for external examiners) and research. This is an evolving process, both in terms of the transition from paper-based to electronic information and assignment submission, and staff engagement. After some initial teething problems (a report on the issues and action taken was provided to LTC in February 2010), student feedback on HELIOS was very positive. The use of a grading system (based on extent of use rather than quality) was supported by students and there was some evidence of the system encouraging staff to improve their grade.

133 In addition to the embedding of externality in formal processes and committees, the College draws on external input through more informal processes such as pedagogy lunches. These are scheduled opportunities which, along with undergraduate and postgraduate teachers' meetings, provide a collegial forum for discussing issues, sharing good practice and debating proposed College developments. The schedule for the lunchtime events in 2010-11 presents a range of activities, including specific sessions to support the successful completion of the levelisation project. As well as internal speakers the schedule includes a range of external speakers, including input from the Higher Education Academy subject centre. Feedback from staff was very positive and the audit team considered that the range of opportunities available to engage with each other within the context of planned internal strategic activities was a feature of good practice.

134 The audit team found extensive evidence of the College taking deliberate steps at an institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities and the student experience. However, the team considered that there might be issues arising in the future due to the action tracking process used by the College. Actions agreed at a previous committee meeting are tracked at the next meeting, but the team found that actions designated as ongoing are less easy to track using this method. The audit team recognised that the College has introduced a number of new policies and processes that require tracking and these are in addition to the considerable amount of business conducted by the committees of the Academic Board. The College might consider reviewing the action tracking processes used by the committees to ensure that no actions are lost during this period of transition and review.

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

135 At the time of the audit the College did not have any collaborative arrangements for delivery of higher education provision.

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

136 In recent years the University of London has progressively devolved the administration of its research degrees to the constituent colleges following a decision to close its Research Degree Examinations Office. For the College this devolution began when, from June 2008, it approved processes ratified by the University that enabled it to administer the selection of externals for examination of its own students. Then, in November 2010, new regulations for the degrees of MPhil and PhD were approved by Academic Board and the College assumed full administrative responsibility for its research degree students. At the time of audit the College had 35 postgraduate research students registered of which 18 were full-time and 17 were part-time. The team were informed that two students had now submitted under the new regulations.

137 A new Research Strategy, approved in 2009, has made an important contribution in relation to learning resources for research students and academic staff research. The Strategy sets out aims and objectives for the development of research student support, while the Code of Practice for Research Degrees, extensively revised and updated in 2009, sets out the principles, expectations, policies, procedures and regulations governing research degrees.

138 Responsibility for research within the College lies with Academic Board, which delegates oversight of the development and implementation of the Research Strategy and policy and procedures to its Research Committee. The Research Committee has a Research Degrees Sub-Committee (RDSC) that is responsible for overseeing the admission, progression, supervision, transfer and assessment of the College's research degree students. Communications between the Research Committee and RDSC benefit from an overlap of membership. The work of RDSC includes detailed consideration of student matters, including the progress of individual students, and tracking the outcomes of annual monitoring. The Director of Research, a post created in 2008, is responsible for the development of the research environment and the supporting infrastructure and chairs RDSC.

139 Subsequent to approval from Academic Board, each summer the College returns an annual report on research degrees to the University. This report is intended to enable the College to assure the University that it is discharging its duties with regard to research degrees. The team found the annual reports covering 2008-09 and 2009-10 to be thorough and reflective analyses of the College's research activities.

The research environment

140 The Research Strategy, revised in 2009 to cover the period 2009-14, has an overarching aim to 'make a significant contribution to the academic disciplines of theology, philosophy, sociology of religion and psychology'. The Research Committee receives an updated Research Strategy implementation plan at each of its termly meetings, and a report is made to Academic Board annually. Each of the College's three departments has also now drafted a new research strategy during 2010-11 to complement the College's Research Strategy.

141 The College first entered the Research Assessment Exercise in 2008. During 2010 the College was awarded all three Arts and Humanities Research Council studentships for which it applied, and regarded this as confirmation that its support for research students and the research environment within the College is fit for purpose. Consequently, the College has submitted a bid for block funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council for studentships.

142 The College has five centres and institutes that have been integrated into departments. All but the first of these are less than two years old, and in November 2010 Academic Board approved draft criteria for the creation and recognition of research centres and institutes. Staff believed that the close relationships they were able to form across departments and centres was a positive feature; research active staff and postgraduate research students felt well supported within the College. Overall the team formed the view that the College had developed an increasingly well-managed and prospering research environment that actively supported the work of both staff and students.

Selection, admission and induction

143 Pre-application advice, the application procedure and deadlines are provided on the College website and in published literature. The Research Degrees Convenor is responsible for administering the application process and any applicant whose first language is not English is required to demonstrate language competence before their admission can be confirmed. Applications are initially considered at termly meetings between the Director of Research, the heads of department, the Quality and Research Coordinator and the Research Degrees Convenor. Applicants may be recommended for interview, asked to revise their proposals or provide more information on their applications, or be advised that their application is not successful. The team learned that those who are asked to refine their applications prior to interview have the opportunity to meet with their prospective supervisor twice, which was a particularly supportive aspect of the process. Should the applicant be invited for interview then a written report and recommendation is provided to the Research Degrees Convenor by the interview panel for consideration by RDSC. Application data is compiled and monitored annually by the Research Committee.

144 At induction students receive a research student induction programme and the Research Student Handbook that offers advice and guidance to assist them during their time studying at the College. For more detailed guidance on the academic expectations of pursuing a research degree with the College, students are also provided with the College's Research Code of Practice.

145 The audit team heard how research students felt very well supported while applying for, and ultimately studying at, the College. Overall the selection, admissions and induction processes were effective in introducing students to all aspects of research at the College, including the one to one support available for students new to tutorial assistant or lecturing roles.

Supervision

146 During 2010 the College began to provide all new research students with first and second supervisors as standard. While a student's supervisors remain their first point of contact for academic support, the Research Degrees Convenor is available to advise students on more generic research matters. An additional nominated role within the College is that of Tutor to Research Students, who has a pastoral responsibility and is available as a contact point for research students independent of their supervisor. This remains an active

role in the College although the audit team learnt that due to the effectiveness of the supervisory system it was very rarely called upon by research students. The Director of Research can also offer guidance and support, along with the Research Administrator.

147 Details on the roles and responsibilities of supervisors are laid down in the College's Code of Practice. The Special Review of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes had recommended that a supervisor's handbook be introduced; this was achieved for 2010 and copies are routinely made available to supervisors. New supervisors are additionally given induction training, and further staff development opportunities are made available for continuing research supervisors in a published timetable of themed events, the scheduling of which are overseen by the Research Committee as a standing item.

148 A student is allocated two supervisors upon registration. The College's Code of Practice states that a more experienced supervisor may act as a mentor to the other supervisor. It was evident to the audit team through discussion with staff and students that the supervisory system was effective. There was evidence that an appropriate mix of subject research specialism and supervisory experience were taken into account when assembling the supervisory team. However, the College had not formalised a selection criteria for supervisors either singly or as a team. Consequently, the selection of a student's supervisory team was in effect an informal process and it was acknowledged by staff during a meeting with the team that it would be useful for the College's Code of Practice to state criteria for the selection of supervisors.

Progress and review arrangements

149 The processes for monitoring and supporting students are detailed in the supervisors' handbook. Re-registration for the next year of study is conditional on there being a satisfactory annual review. This review can be a combined meeting to also consider the end of a probationary period or a transfer of status between MPhil and PhD. Re-registration can be made dependent upon the meeting of conditions set by the review panel and responses to any conditions set are monitored by RDSC. The team noted that RDSC was thorough in its consideration and approval of progress and review arrangements.

Development of research and other skills

150 The College's strategy for promoting and developing postgraduate research and training is part of the Research Strategy.

151 Research student presentation days ensure that all students are able to present their work for peer review at least once a year. The Research Committee monitors the scheduling of these presentation days and the date of the annual College research seminar. The Committee also monitors the training events offered to research students who wish to take on tutorial assistant or lecturing roles. The team learnt that students who take on such responsibilities within the College can also receive mentoring support from their supervisors, and that all those who teach or tutor at the College are invited to the relevant staff training opportunities that take place during the year. The team concluded that adequate training and support is available for research students who teach on College programmes.

152 The audit team learnt how the Research Committee and the RDSC were active in promoting skills training and personal development opportunities for research students. As such, students now have access to a twin supervisory system, mentors for teaching and tutorial assistant roles, an annual research conference, weekly seminars, and department based research days. The Special Review of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes had recommended that the College 'review its provision of skills training and personal

development opportunities' and the team found that the College had been active in promoting a student experience that was now more comparable with that experienced by their peers in larger and more research intensive institutions.

Feedback mechanisms

153 The College revised its student consultation procedures in 2007-08 to include in its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook a role for the Research Degree Convenor to hold termly consultation events with research degree students. Given the size of the College and the research student body, informal means of raising issues with individual members of staff are also valued.

Any such issues raised by students are passed directly to the Director of Research, the Research Degrees Convenor or the Quality and Research Coordinator, depending on the nature of the issue. The audit team learnt during meetings that both staff and students valued the utility of this informal feedback method.

154 While the team learned that postgraduate students had opted not to establish a Staff Student Liaison Committee s, an annual feedback forum and social event for master's and postgraduate research students was a regular feature. However, the team learned upon reviewing the January 2010 event that it seemed to be constituted primarily of postgraduate taught students. The team also noted that the Research Committee was regularly attended by its student and external members, and that 'student issues' was a formalised and thoroughly addressed standing item.

155 A recommendation from the Special Review of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes was for the College to consider 'introducing more formalised and effective ways of collecting feedback from its research students..., and providing them with feedback on how such feedback was acted upon'. The audit team learned that a research student questionnaire that operated in recent years on a biannual cycle was now circulated annually. However, it was unclear to the team how the College acted upon feedback from the questionnaire. In contrast to this observation, the team also observed that the informal feedback mechanisms available were understood and well valued by students and that student involvement in the Research Committee and the formal feedback that resulted was a positive feature.

Assessment

156 The College maps its research degree regulations against the requirements of the University's Ordinances, regulations and procedures as well as the *Code of practice, Section 1*. Until recently the University was responsible for research degree examinations, but in June 2008 this was devolved to the College. It now administers research degree examinations for its students in accordance with its own regulations for the degrees of MPhil and PhD, approved in September 2010. The examination process described in the regulations maps directly onto those of the University that the College followed prior to this approval. The College has also taken on responsibility for the appointment of research degree examiners from the University, instructions for which are included in an annex to the newly approved research regulations. These procedures were based directly upon those previously enacted by the University and as such the College was experienced in managing this responsibility and appropriately adhering to the requirements of the process.

157 The College's Research Code of Practice aims to ensure that the standard of research student awards meet the requirements of the *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*. Notwithstanding the College's

acceptance that greater clarity regarding the criteria for the selection of supervisors would be beneficial, discussed in the section on Supervision (page 26), and in particular regarding a supervisor's experiential requirement with respect to research degree completions, the College's Code of Practice was found to adequately reflect the *Code of practice, Section 1*.

Representations (complaints and appeals)

158 The College's Research Code includes a complaints procedure that is available to students and to staff, and the Research Committee has a role in considering any generic issues raised in a complaint. In making complaints, research students are entitled to support from the Heythrop Students' Union and the University of London Students' Union. The appeals procedure is that of the University. Students who wish to appeal can gain advice from the Director of Research and the Research Degrees Convenor on the processes to be followed. The RDSC consider generic issues surrounding any appeal to ensure that any procedural issues raised can subsequently be addressed. The team found no evidence of recent complaints from research students.

159 The audit team found that the College's arrangements for its postgraduate research students met the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 1* and were operating as intended.

Section 7: Published information

160 The College publishes a large range of information in both hard-copy and either on its website or virtual learning environment, the latter of which is playing an increasingly important role in information provision. Production is centralised in terms of the prospectus, programme leaflets, programme and module specifications and student and module handbooks. The accuracy of information is checked by staff within the College administration who liaise with academic colleagues on matters relating to modules and programmes. Module descriptions and programme specifications can be amended only with the approval of the Learning and Teaching Committee, and this is coordinated by the Quality and Research Coordinator on behalf of the Committee. The Quality and Research Coordinator confirms to staff in the Student Services Centre when modules have changed so that published information can be updated. There is a range of checks and balances in place to ensure accuracy of published material with the prospectus in particular subject to final sign off by the Principal.

161 The College has a rolling programme of publishing non-confidential material on its website, including most handbooks, student guidance, regulations, committee agendas and minutes, and programme specifications and module descriptions. This is designed to enhance communication and understanding, as communication with staff and students has been identified as an issue for attention.

162 The 2006 audit recommended an improvement in the consistency of module information. The College's development of HELIOS has included minimum requirements for information at module level to address this issue. The audit team had access to all modules on HELIOS and considered the grading system (used to encourage tutor development of their site) was effective; both students and staff were positive about the use of the virtual learning environment to support learning.

163 The audit team found that, overall, reliance can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information the College publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

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The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000

Fax 01452 557070

Email: comms@qaa.ac.uk

Web www.qaa.ac.uk

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

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