

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

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Preface

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. To this end, QAA carries out institutional audits of higher education institutions.

In England and Northern Ireland, QAA conducts institutional audits on behalf of the higher education sector, to provide public information about the maintenance of academic standards and assurance of the quality of learning opportunities provided for students. It also operates under contract to the Higher Education Funding Council in England and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland to provide evidence to meet their statutory obligations to assure the quality and standards of academic programmes for which they disburse public funding. The audit method was developed in partnership with the funding councils and the higher education representative bodies and agreed following consultation with higher education institutions and other interested organisations. The method was endorsed by the Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills). It was revised in 2006 following recommendations from the Quality Assurance Framework Review Group, a representative group established to review the structures and processes of quality assurance in England and Northern Ireland, and evaluate the work of QAA.

Institutional audit is an evidence-based process carried out through peer review. It forms part of the Quality Assurance Framework, established in 2002, following revisions to the United Kingdom's approach to external quality assurance. At the centre of the process is an emphasis on students and their learning.

The aim of the revised institutional audit process is to meet the public interest in knowing that universities and colleges of higher education in England and Northern Ireland have effective means of:

- ensuring that the awards and qualifications in higher education are of an academic standard at least consistent with those referred to in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and are, where relevant, exercising their powers as degree awarding bodies in a proper manner
- providing learning opportunities of a quality that enables students, whether on taught or research programmes, to achieve those higher education awards and qualifications
- enhancing the quality of their educational provision, particularly by building on information gained through monitoring, internal and external reviews, and feedback from stakeholders.

Institutional audit results in judgements about the institutions being reviewed. Judgements are made about:

- the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of awards
- the confidence that 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.

Audit teams also comment specifically on:

- the institution's arrangements for maintaining appropriate academic standards and quality of provision of postgraduate research programmes
- the institution's approach to developing and implementing institutional strategies for enhancing the quality of its educational provision, both taught and by research

- the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the institution publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

If the audit includes the institution's collaborative provision the judgements and comments also apply, unless, the audit team considers that any of its judgements or comments in respect of the collaborative provision differ from those in respect of the institution's 'home' provision. Any such differences will be reflected in the form of words used to express a judgement or comment on the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the institution publishes, and about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards.

Explanatory note on the format for the Report and the Annex

The reports of quality audits have to be useful to several audiences. The revised institutional audit process makes a clear distinction between that part of the reporting process aimed at an external audience and that aimed at the institution. There are three elements to the reporting:

- the **Summary** of the findings of the report, including the judgements, is intended for the wider public, especially potential students
- the **Report** is an overview of the findings of the audit for both lay and external professional audiences
- a separate **Annex** provides the detail and explanations behind the findings of the audit and is intended to be of practical use to the institution.

The report is as concise as is consistent with providing enough detail for it to make sense to an external audience as a stand-alone document. The summary and the report, without the annex, are published in hard copy. The summary, the report and the annex are published on QAA's website. The institution will receive the summary, report and annex in hard copy (*Institutional audit handbook: England and Northern Ireland 2006* - Annexes B and C refer).

Summary

Introduction

Following a prolonged engagement with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (the School) for the purpose of scrutinising its successful application for taught and research degree awarding powers, a team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the School on 15 and 16 November 2007 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 that the School offers, on behalf of the University of London.

To arrive at its conclusions, the audit team spoke to members of staff throughout the School and to current students, and read a wide range of documents about the ways in which the School manages the academic aspects of its provision.

In institutional audit, the institution's management of both academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities are audited. The term 'academic standards' is used to describe the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an award (for example, a degree). It should be at a similar level across the United Kingdom (UK). The term 'quality of learning opportunities' is used to describe the support provided by an institution to enable students to achieve the awards. It is about the provision of appropriate teaching, support and assessment for the students.

Outcomes of the institutional audit

As a result of its investigations the audit team's view of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine is that:

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

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The audit found that the School is in the early stages of developing its strategy for enhancement. There was evidence that the School is taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities, but as yet these are taking place outside any articulation of a strategic approach to this objective.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

The audit concluded that the institution's arrangements for its postgraduate research students meet 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*.

Published information

The audit found that reliance can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the institution publishes about its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas as being good practice:

- the development of more systematic approaches to obtaining student feedback across the School as a whole, and the responsiveness of the School to the views of its London-based students
- the support given to London-based students prior to their arrival and throughout their period of study
- the effective management of change and the engagement of staff in the development of new arrangements for learning and teaching.

Recommendations for action

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

It would be advisable for the School to:

- develop an assessment strategy that deals with issues of validity, reliability and consistency in order to underpin the comparability of standards across awards.
- continue to clarify the roles and purposes of the academic committees to ensure that they work together in an increasingly effective and complementary way.

It would be desirable for the School to:

- continue to develop the more systematic use of management information to support the achievement of both strategic and course-level goals.
- continue to make progress with the analysis and development of quality assurance processes in order that they may become effective tools for enhancement
- build on its considerable efforts to achieve greater parity in the quality of learning opportunities between its London-based and distance-learning provision.

Report

1 An institutional audit of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (the School) was undertaken in November 2007, following a prolonged engagement to scrutinise the School's application for taught and research degree awarding powers. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the School's management of the academic standards of the awards it delivers on behalf of the University of London and of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

2 The audit team comprised Professor J Baldock, Professor A Cryer and Professor A Jago, auditors, and Miss G Hooper, audit secretary. The audit was coordinated for QAA by Professor R Harris, Assistant Director, Reviews Group.

Section 1: Introduction and Background

3 The School is a self-governing college of the University of London (the University), awarding degrees of the University. It is an exclusively postgraduate institution, offering taught courses operating in London (including three in collaboration with other colleges within the University), distance learning taught courses through the University External Programme, and research degrees. Its mission is to contribute to the improvement of health worldwide through the pursuit of excellence in research, postgraduate teaching and advanced training in relevant areas, and to undertake activities which influence policy and practice.

4 The School has an academic staff complement of 461, with additional teaching support provided by a cadre of academic and research staff; its distance-learning programmes are supported by over 100 part-time external tutors on teaching-only contracts. Student numbers in academic year 2006-07 were 2,835 (2,497 taught, including 1,922 distance learning, all part-time, and 338 research). These numbers have grown by some 90 per cent in the last decade, an increase largely but not wholly explained by the School's development of distance-learning courses. The student population is extremely diverse: an internal study of the 2005-06 cohort reveals that London-based students came from 102 countries, and that their ages ranged from 20 to 63.

5 The audit team met senior academic and administrative staff and Students' Union representatives; it also had online discussions with distance-learning students to discuss areas normally covered in student written submissions.

6 The School's previous institutional audit, in March 2003, resulted in a judgement of broad confidence in the soundness of the School's current and, provided that plans to develop periodic programme review with external involvement were carried out, future management of the quality of those programmes. It expressed broad confidence in the School's current and likely future capacity to manage the academic standards of its awards.

7 The audit found that the School has addressed all recommendations of the 2003 audit. The main response involved a major Teaching and Research Degrees Management Review (the 2005 Review), which led to the introduction of revised structures, largely under the Dean of Studies, a newly-created post, responsible to the Director for the strategic development and day-to-day management of taught programmes. The main emphasis of the administrative restructuring was on centralising a range of functions formerly devolved to academic units. In terms of the academic deliberative structure, the 2005 Review led to the creation of two new Senate committees with overlapping membership: Learning and Teaching Policy Committee and Quality and Standards Committee. At the time of the audit these committees had been functioning for a year, and were still in the process of fine-tuning their respective functions, an issue about which further comment is made later (see paragraph 20).

8 Overall, the audit found the School's approval, monitoring and review processes carefully planned and properly monitored; they collectively constitute an appropriate and effective means of assuring the quality of student learning opportunities; and the structures and mechanisms designed to ensure the academic standards of the University's higher education awards are robust.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

9 The School stated that it defines and assures the academic standards of its awards by rigorous procedures for selection, course design, course approval and assessment. It stressed that externality is a central feature of these procedures, which are benchmarked against relevant external guidance; it addresses the regulatory frameworks and guidance provided by the UK research councils and relevant requirements of professional and statutory bodies. The audit confirms that this is so, noting that the course maps by which the School describes its taught and research degrees are informed by the level descriptors of the FHEQ and supported by quality assurance procedures drawing extensively on the *Code of practice*. Noting also, however, that distance-learning courses have both a course map and the fuller programme specification required by the London External System, the audit team suggests that the School may find it helpful to provide a similarly detailed specification across the board.

10 The roles and responsibilities of external examiners are set out in regulations and procedures for all (including distance learning) taught master's courses; procedures for their appointment, induction and duties (including reporting) are transparent and consistent with the governing regulations for different elements of the School's portfolio; procedures for responding to examiners' comments and advice are satisfactory. Although the audit found a few areas where slippage had occurred, these did not impact negatively on academic standards, and the audit team concludes that external examining is effective in assuring the academic standards of the School's programmes and awards.

11 The School's annual monitoring system addresses academic standards primarily through the annual quality report; the system of quinquennial periodic review in place at the time of the audit appears to be aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*. Both annual monitoring and periodic reviews are monitored by the Quality and Standards Committee to ensure consistency of operation. The School's quality management procedures are fit for purpose and enable it to align its practices with the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points.

12 The School's examination regulations and marking schemes for London-based courses are clear and readily available. For distance-learning courses, the School specifies detailed assessment criteria within University regulations; these are also widely available, and students who met the audit team confirmed the adequacy of the information and guidance they contain.

13 The School's three departments operate similar marking criteria; assessment arrangements for distance-learning courses, which involve a greater emphasis on unseen written examinations, are also broadly comparable. Consistency is further supported by an element of common membership of the examination boards of London-based and distance-learning courses and by the fact that some distance-learning external examiners have previously examined London-based courses.

14 In addition, the Learning and Teaching Policy Committee conducts periodic assessment reviews, attending particularly to consistency. At the time of the audit a new assessment review group was addressing the topic in relation to assessment rules across courses, an issue which had revealed variability of practice. The audit team, while welcoming such debates, believes that the debates would be better informed if they took place within an overall strategic framework. Hence, while the audit found that the School's arrangements for student assessment allow it to

maintain effective control of the standards of its awards, it would be advisable for the School to develop an assessment strategy dealing with issues of validity, reliability and consistency, in order to underpin the comparability of standards across awards.

15 The revised central structures for the administration of learning and teaching provide new opportunities for the better-informed management of academic standards and quality, and for strategic developments in learning and teaching. Nevertheless, the School acknowledged that there remains scope to improve its use of available sources of information to drive decision-making and planning at both course and school level. The audit team, while considering the School's use of statistical management information provides effective support for the assurance of the academic standards of its courses and awards, considers it desirable for the School to continue to develop the more systematic use of management information to support the achievement of both strategic and course-level goals.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

16 Responsibility for ensuring the School's overall alignment with external reference points rests with the Dean of Studies, whose appointment has considerably strengthened the breadth and depth of this alignment. The nature of the School's provision and the number and range of external teaching inputs it embraces mean that extensive feedback from relevant external communities, including alumni, is received and incorporated into planning and developing the learning environment. Many members of academic staff serve, nationally and internationally, as external examiners and members of validation and review panels, so contributing additional experience and expertise. The audit found that the School has in place procedures and guidelines which protect the learning opportunities of its students, and that its teaching and learning activities engage appropriately with relevant external influences.

17 There is also a newly appointed Associate Dean of Studies who has quality enhancement as a key responsibility. Nevertheless, the School recognises that it has some way to go before its enhancement procedures can be said to be settled, and the audit team considers it desirable for it to continue to make progress with the analysis and development of quality assurance processes in order that they may become effective tools for enhancement.

18 The School has straightforward and effective measures for assuring the quality of research students' learning opportunities. The research students who met the audit team endorsed the monitoring procedures and spoke highly of the skilled and conscientious supervision they receive.

19 Procedures for the approval, review and monitoring of taught courses are clearly documented and regularly updated. Regulatory and policy frameworks are transparent, with all key documents readily available, and responsibility for their maintenance and communication clear. For distance-learning provision, the same internal approval process applies, but with recommendations for approval passed to the External System for determination. The audit found that the School exposes its approval, monitoring and review activity to appropriate levels of external involvement.

20 In addition to overseeing the implementation of departmental review procedures and outcomes, both the Quality and Standards, and Learning and Teaching Policy Committees review performance data from across the taught-course portfolio. This contributes to institutional overview, but the audit found that the overview itself is less than wholly integrated. The audit team, having considered the first year of operation of these two committees, advises the School to continue to clarify the roles and purposes of the academic committees, in order to ensure that they work together in an increasingly effective and complementary way.

21 While the quality of the documentation supporting approval, monitoring and review procedures is variable, it never falls below the level required for the School to be able to assure itself of the quality of student learning opportunities. Although the procedure does not invariably

operate with optimal efficiency, the School is taking steps to address both the level of integration between different parts of the system and the speed of response to issues identified. Overall, the School's approval, monitoring and review procedures are effective in assuring the quality of learning opportunities for all students.

22 The School's current mechanisms to secure student involvement in quality processes appear effective and inclusive. As well as having competent feedback and representation arrangements in academic areas, the School ensures that support services solicit and respond appropriately to such feedback. The audit team, while considering the Student Representative Council an encouraging initiative comprising elected representatives from each of the London-based MSc courses and PhD students, concludes that the high turnover of membership is inevitable in an institution populated mainly by one-year master's students and has, thus far, inhibited its effectiveness.

23 For distance-learning students, provision for whom was subject to comment in the last institutional audit, monitoring and review have been considerably developed since 2003. Student evaluations of each module are collected by questionnaire-based feedback, while electronic discussion (notably a student-staff virtual common room) and conference arrangements (including a 'feedback to organisers' conference) are used for general communication, troubleshooting and response monitoring. The School has continued to address the challenge of improving response rates and has developed a method of representation for distance-learning students, and of enabling such students to contribute to the Student Representative Council.

24 The School has also initiated cross-institutional surveys of taught and research students; these are scheduled to become annual events. Both surveys attracted encouraging response rates, and there already exists evidence of the comments being addressed, aided by the provision of institutional-level information to departments. As elsewhere, students who met the audit team endorsed the School's responsiveness. The development of more systematic approaches to obtaining student feedback across the School as a whole and the responsiveness of the School to the views of London-based students constitute a feature of good practice.

25 Students spoke positively of their involvement in course monitoring and review, but emphasised that, given the maturity of the student body and the culture of the School, formal arrangements for representation are in practice a fail-safe arrangement where day-to-day staff-student contact fails to resolve specific problems.

26 The inter-relatedness of the School's research and teaching is a key feature of its academic character, and its recruitment, appointment, probation and promotion procedures are designed to ensure that it remains so. Both external examiners' reports and student feedback demonstrate the value the research eminence of teachers and supervisors adds to student learning. The audit confirmed that the School's research reputation and expertise inform and enhance course design, teaching and supervision.

27 The School offers four distance-learning courses under the auspices of the London External Programme. The respective responsibilities of the two parties are clearly specified in University documentation and, at the time of the audit, the School was giving active consideration to further developments to support this rapidly expanding area of activity. Assessment arrangements are similar to those for London-based courses, but with greater weight given to unseen examinations. The School is engaging responsibly with the challenges of maintaining academic standards and delivering a positive distance-learning experience, albeit that it has yet to surmount all the challenges involved.

28 In good part to provide comparable levels of service to that received by London-based students, the School has put in place structures designed to make the previously strong course-based approach to its distance-learning portfolio institutional in focus. Nonetheless, a significant proportion of distance-learning students, while supportive of the School's efforts, has reservations about the effectiveness of some aspects of provision. While satisfied that the School is addressing

the issue seriously and has made significant progress since the last institutional audit, the audit team considers it desirable for the School to continue its considerable efforts to achieve greater parity in the quality of learning opportunities between its London-based and distance-learning provision.

29 The School's approach to allocating learning resources aims to integrate the learning environment with student need. As a whole, the School's learning resources have been judged excellent in a range of external reviews; students confirmed their very high quality; and the audit found both the School's learning resources themselves and their management commensurate with enabling students to meet their prescribed learning outcomes. Subject to some development of the virtual learning environment, this finding can be said to operate across and between courses and into research and distance learning.

30 The School is in the process of developing a formal admissions policy, completion of which has been assigned priority status in its five-year action plan; current selection and admission procedures, although yet to function within an explicit strategic framework, ensure that decision-making is fair and transparent.

31 Students receive extensive and detailed advice as to the nature and sources of available support. The audit found that expectations, although high, are generally met. Support arrangements involve academic departments, the Registry and the student support team (comprising the student adviser, careers adviser and student disability coordinator); a counselling service is also available through the health service. The School appears responsive to the needs of all its students, and willing to provide additional resources to help meet exceptional or unexpected difficulties. Overall, the audit team considers the support given to London-based students prior to their arrival and throughout their period of study a feature of good practice.

32 The School's extensive human resources policy emphasises staff development (all categories of staff are included) and appears aligned with institutional aims and objectives. Appraisal is well incorporated into staffing procedures, and academic staff endorsed its developmental as well as managerial effectiveness.

33 The School employs a full-time staff development manager and assistant, who liaise with senior institutional and departmental staff in planning and developing the annual staff development programme; at the time of the audit its Certificate in Learning and Teaching programme had 60 participants, a significant number given the size of the School; it also operates a voluntary and, at the time of the audit, largely unrecorded peer observation scheme. Overall, staff development is an area in which the School engages fully: its procedures are not only supportive but acknowledged as such by those subject to them. The opportunities for all categories of staff to engage in training and development serve as constructive supports to the management of change, and contribute significantly to their engagement in the development of new arrangements for learning and teaching, matters which the audit identified as a feature of good practice.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

34 Senior staff are aware of the ways in which management information can be used for quality enhancement, and in some areas, notably module performance and completion statistics in annual monitoring, the School makes good use of management information. While there is potential for a more systematic approach to be taken to such information at course and institutional levels, as the School itself acknowledges, in order to gain optimal benefit from the information available, significant further investment would be necessary.

35 In a number of areas, the School has implemented what it considers good practice in relation to enhancement, many or all of which are expected to receive further consideration when the current draft enhancement strategy is completed and implemented.

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

36 At the time of the audit the School offered three postgraduate courses with other colleges within the University, responsibility for the management of which lies with the lead institution. The courses are subject to the rules and regulations of the University. Students on these courses have similar learning opportunities and assessment arrangements to those taking School-based courses. The School's distance-learning programmes are also run under the aegis of the University, but do not constitute collaborative provision.

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

37 The QAA review of postgraduate research degree programmes, conducted in 2006, had a satisfactory outcome, with a number of areas cited as good practice. The School's research degree regulations are aligned with all relevant parts of the Academic Infrastructure.

38 The School has clearly defined, robust and satisfactory procedures for selecting, admitting, inducting, training, monitoring the progress of, and securing feedback from, research students. Students found induction helpful academically, administratively and socially, and endorsed the School's claim that its research reputation was a major influence on their decision to apply. The audit found the School was justified in claiming to have created an 'informal and non-hierarchical culture that encourages frank dialogue between staff and students'.

39 The appeals and complaints procedure applies to all students, although a range of informal mechanisms exists to enable issues to be resolved without invoking the formal procedure. While none of the students who met the audit team had any experience of this procedure, they were complimentary about the responsiveness of staff and confirmed the efficacy of informal methods in the overwhelming majority of cases.

40 Research degree students are assessed by federally approved regulations, with responsibility for final assessment resting with the University. Any such students seeking to challenge any aspect of the examining process do so through a well-established University procedure.

41 The audit concluded that the institution's arrangements for its postgraduate research students meet the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

Section 7: Published information

Accuracy and completeness of published information

42 The Registry is responsible for checking and approving all published materials, from the Prospectus to student handbooks, and from publicity to web-based content. There is, however, some uncertainty as to whether all departmental or unit-level materials are similarly checked and approved centrally, and the School may think it wise to check the reliability and effectiveness with which this is done.

43 The students who met the audit team were extremely complimentary about the quality of the printed and electronic information with which they had been provided, both as candidates and as students. They confirmed that the information is accurate, comprehensive and contains an appropriate level of detail, but stressed that it should be seen as augmenting the caring and collegial atmosphere of the School.

44 The nature and extent of information on the Unistats website is largely restricted to factual demographics as a result of the School's small size and postgraduate population.

45 Overall, the audit found that published materials are seen by its consumers as accurate and complete, and that reliance can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the School publishes about its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

Section 8: Recommendations and features of good practice

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

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

47 Features of good practice identified by the audit team include:

- the development of more systematic approaches to obtaining student feedback across the School as a whole, and the responsiveness of the School to the views of its London-based students (paragraph 24)
- the support given to London-based students prior to their arrival and throughout their period of study (paragraph 31)
- the effective management of change and the engagement of staff in the development of new arrangements for learning and teaching (paragraph 33).

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

It would be advisable for the School to:

- develop an assessment strategy that deals with issues of validity, reliability and consistency in order to underpin the comparability of standards across awards (paragraph 14)
- continue to clarify the roles and purposes of the academic committees to ensure that they work together in an increasingly effective and complementary way (paragraph 20).

49 It would be desirable for the School to:

- continue to develop the more systematic use of management information to support the achievement of both strategic and course-level goals (paragraph 15)
- continue to make progress with the analysis and development of quality assurance processes in order that they may become effective tools for enhancement (paragraph 17)
- build on its considerable efforts to achieve greater parity in the quality of learning opportunities between its London-based and distance-learning provision (paragraph 28).

Appendix

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine's response to the institutional audit report

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine welcomes the report of the QAA's institutional audit of 2007 and its overall conclusion that confidence can be placed in the soundness of the School's present and future management of the academic standards of our awards and the quality of the learning opportunities available to our students. We believe the audit report endorses the School's pride in its international reputation as a provider of high quality postgraduate education and research training in public health and tropical medicine.

The School is very pleased that the following features of good practice have been highlighted:

- the development of more systematic approaches to obtaining student feedback across the School as a whole, and the responsiveness of the School to the views of its London-based students
- the support given to London-based students prior to their arrival and throughout their period of study
- the effective management of change and the engagement of staff in the development of new arrangements for learning and teaching.

The audit made no essential recommendations and the advisable/desirable ones are all constructive and fit well with ongoing plans. The School has undergone substantial growth, change and development since the previous audit of 2003, with revisions to various teaching management and support structures being implemented in 2006. We feel these revisions provide a firm foundation for our plans to further develop the School's teaching programme. The auditors found that the revised structures contributed positively to the School whilst also addressing recommendations from the 2003 audit. They advised that we should continue to clarify the roles and purposes of the revised committees - we plan to do so as we monitor and continue to enhance our organisational arrangements. The auditors' recommendation, to develop an assessment strategy, is being addressed following the conclusion of our recent periodic Assessment Review.

Our emerging quality and standards strategy and plan of work also address the audit's desirable recommendations, and reflect our commitment to continue improving the use of management information, developing our quality enhancement strategy, and enhancing our provision of a balanced mix of high-quality learning opportunities across our London-based and distance learning courses.

The School welcomes the report and its findings, which will be a key resource at the heart of the School's ongoing assurance and enhancement of quality and standards. The School's response to the Audit's recommendations will be overseen by its Quality and Standards Committee on behalf of its senior academic body, the Senate.

