QAA

Roehampton University

Institutional Review
by the Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

January 2013

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an Institutional Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Roehampton University. The review took place on 21-25 January 2013 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Reverend Professor Kenneth Newport
- Professor Peter Bush
- Miss Roxana Shamsolmaali (student reviewer)
- Ms Kathryn Powell (review secretary).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Roehampton University and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. In this report the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
    - threshold academic standards[1]
    - the quality of learning opportunities
    - the information provided about learning opportunities
    - the enhancement of learning opportunities
- provides commentaries on the theme topic
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the institution is taking or plans to take.

A summary of the key findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing Roehampton University the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The themes for the academic year 2012-13 are the First Year Student Experience and Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and the institution is required to elect, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[2] Background information about Roehampton University is given at the end of this report. A dedicated page of the website explains the method for Institutional Review of higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland[3] and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents.

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[1] For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx
[3] www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/IRENI/Pages/default.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Roehampton University

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Roehampton University.

- Academic standards at the University **meet UK expectations** for threshold standards.
- The quality of student learning opportunities at the University **meets UK expectations**.
- Information about learning opportunities produced by the University **meets UK expectations**.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities at the University **meets UK expectations**.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following **features of good practice** at Roehampton University.

- The approach to staff development, which provides a coherent and integrated framework to enhance student learning (paragraph 2.1).
- The collaboration between the Students' Union and the University in training student representatives, and through the Student Senate, to ensure that the student voice is supported and effectively responded to (paragraph 2.3.1).
- The annual audit of admissions arrangements (paragraph 2.5).
- The complementary and mutually supportive roles of departments and the Employability and Entrepreneurship Advisors in providing diverse and relevant employability support for students (paragraph 2.7.3).
- The care and commitment of the disabilities team in their support for students with disabilities at admission, induction and through their programme (paragraph 2.8.2).
- The international section of the website, which clearly relates the University's entry criteria to national qualifications in the countries of origin of most international students (paragraph 2.9.1).
- The availability of effective academic writing modules at different academic levels for international students (paragraph 2.9.3).
- The work of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit in supporting all staff and students to address any problems and to enhance student learning (paragraph 4.2).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following recommendations to Roehampton University.

- Ensure that the locus of authority for the appointment of external examiners is clearly understood across the University and consistently reflected in relevant documentation (by the start of the 2013-14 academic year) (paragraph 1.2.2).
- Ensure that all postgraduate research students who teach undergo the appropriate level of training prior to the commencement of their teaching activity (by the start of the 2013-14 academic year) (paragraph 2.1.3).

- Establish a process for the systematic review of policies and procedures for promoting the contribution of students to quality assurance and enhancement (by the start of the 2013-14 academic year) (paragraph 2.3.3).
- Ensure that the University's published list of collaborative partners is complete and up to date (by the start of the summer term 2013) (paragraph 2.11).
- Put in place systems to ensure that a legally binding, signed agreement is in force for all collaborative programmes, prior to enrolling students (by the start of the summer term 2013) (paragraph 2.11.2).
- Establish formal arrangements to quality assure distance-learning materials in advance of their being adopted on a programme (by the start of the 2013-14 academic year) (paragraph 2.12.2).
- Review the management of work-based and placement learning to ensure that all students have access to sufficient, suitable and timely opportunities (by the start of the 2013-14 academic year) (paragraph 2.13.2).
- Develop a clear communications and dissemination plan for the Student Partnership, in collaboration with students (by the start of the 2013-14 academic year) (paragraph 2.14.1).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms the following actions** that Roehampton University is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The development and use of the University's management information system for analysing and monitoring data on the progress of postgraduate research students (paragraph 2.4.3).

Student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement

There is comprehensive student membership of committees at all levels of the University. Student representatives participate actively in programme approval, annual programme reviews and periodic programme reviews. Students and staff indentified significant benefits to student engagement in quality assurance, and provided examples of student-led enhancement initiatives.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the operational description and handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining Institutional Review for England and Northern Ireland.[4]

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[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/IRENI/Pages/default.aspx

About Roehampton University

Roehampton University is situated in south-west London and has two campuses. It was granted university title in 2004, having exercised taught degree-awarding powers for four years in a federal relationship with the University of Surrey. Roehampton is a collegiate institution, formed in 1975 from four colleges, which contribute to the wider experience and welfare of students. The University is responsible for all aspects of academic life.

A range of subjects are offered in ten academic departments. Postgraduate research students are registered in the departments, but are also members of the Graduate School, which is an overarching structure and network that helps to foster a research community across the University.

The University's current strategic goals are:

- to establish an international reputation in learning and teaching in subject areas which combine excellence and critical mass
- to be ranked in the top third of UK universities for the quality of research
- to be recognised as one of the top ten universities in the UK for student satisfaction
- to be regarded as one of the best universities to work for in the UK
- to prepare students to be responsible and confident citizens and leaders in a complex world, by offering all students the opportunity to engage with major issues of importance to contemporary society
- to be the top 'new University' in London for graduate employability
- to create a campus environment that is a stimulating and inspiring place in which to study, work and live, and which is environmentally efficient
- to establish significant and innovative partnerships with institutions and organisations in the UK and abroad which have world-class reputations.

Since the last QAA review, the four Schools have been restructured into ten departments (although two retain the title of School), to establish smaller, sustainable academic units, and to strengthen academic leadership and a sense of community for the benefit of students and staff. The restructure created three Deputy Provost posts, who oversee the departments and the Graduate School. These posts have a key quality assurance role. The academic year has also been restructured from two semesters to three terms. More year-long modules have been introduced, with the aim of improving first-year student retention, combined with steps to increase entry standards.

The importance of being able to offer sustainable, marketable and high-quality programmes which enhance the employability potential of students is a key theme running through the Strategic Plan. The University recognises that the student experience will become the main driver of University strategy, consistent with the vision set out in the Student Partnership. A refocused and expanded Employability and Careers service is now more closely aligned with the academic departments. Steps have been taken to create a more sustainable programme offer, and to simplify the first-year undergraduate curriculum.

Collaborative partnerships have been reviewed, to focus on developing fewer, more strategically significant relationships that contribute to the overall sustainability of the University, augment its capabilities and to reach a larger population of potential students locally and internationally.

Explanation of the findings about Roehampton University

This section explains the key findings of the review in more detail.[5]

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#)[6] is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.[7]

1   Academic standards

Outcome

The academic standards at Roehampton University **meet UK expectations** for threshold standards. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Meeting external qualifications benchmarks

1.1   The University takes account of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC) level descriptors to set programme aims and intended learning outcomes. There are mechanisms in place to ensure that the University's awards align with UK expectations. Programmes are clearly aligned with level descriptors through design and approval processes. External examiners confirm that programme intended learning outcomes and student achievement meet the expected level for the award.

1.1.1   SEEC level descriptors are a key reference point, and are used appropriately in programme design. However, academic staff that the team spoke to were largely unaware of them. Accordingly, the University may wish to familiarise those involved in programme development with the use made by the University of SEEC descriptors in programme design and approval.

1.1.2   Module handbooks provide clear information to students on what level is required to make the transition from A level study to degree level. Following a recommendation from the previous QAA review in 2007, the University has taken necessary steps to ensure that student module choices will ensure the sufficient accumulation of credit for progression or award. A clear framework is in place for credit transfer.

Use of external examiners

1.2   The University website provides easy access to clear and comprehensive information on arrangements for external examiners. The role of the external examiner is clearly defined through induction and by means of a Good Practice guide for taught programmes, and the Research Degree Regulations for research programmes. The University's approach to external examining was reviewed following the publication of *Chapter B7: External examining* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

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[5] The full body of evidence used to compile the report is not published. However, it is available on request for inspection. Please contact QAA Reviews Group.
[6] www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx
[7] See note 4.

1.2.1   External examiners' reports are disseminated and responded to effectively. They are sent initially to the Academic Office or direct to the Vice-Chancellor if the external examiner prefers. Copies are then sent to departments and to the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit. Responses are made by the Programme Convenor, and monitored by the relevant Deputy Provost. The Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee receives an overview of external examiner reports from departments. Reports are published prominently on the virtual learning environment for students to access.

1.2.2   Practice for appointing external examiners does not fully accord with written policy. Nominations for external examiners should be approved by the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee, while in practice, they are appointed by the Deputy Provost, who informs the Committee. There are slightly different arrangements for the approval of external examiners for doctoral programmes. Again, it is not clear whether nominations should be approved by the Research Degrees Board or appointed by the Chair of the Board. The team **recommends** that the University should ensure that the locus of authority for the appointment of external examiners is clearly understood across the University and consistently reflected in relevant documentation.

Assessment and standards

1.3   Since the previous QAA review in 2007, the University has promoted a consistent approach to assessment across the departments. The University Senate is responsible for approving University-wide policies on assessment, for example regarding extensions, late submissions and re-sits. There are new Academic Regulations, which provide an overarching framework and clearly set out the administrative structures that oversee assessment, progression and award. The University's central Awards and Progression Board ensures consistent decisions are made across programmes of study.

1.3.1   The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy sets out a number of key principles relating to student feedback, including a commitment to increasing opportunities for formative assessment and increasing engagement with feedback, which is being taken forward at department level. The amount and timing of assessment is kept under review through annual programme reviews. The University has a policy of providing feedback within four weeks, though staff and students confirmed that it is frequently provided in a shorter period. Some students said that feedback on some work had been available within a few days. Students are generally appreciative of the feedback they receive, and find it helpful.

1.3.2   Academic misconduct is dealt with in accordance with the principles and policies set out in the Student Disciplinary Regulations. Staff are conversant with these regulations and discussed how issues of plagiarism are dealt with consistently across provision. Guidance relating to plagiarism is available in programme handbooks and on the University's website.

1.3.3   There are University-wide guidelines on marking and grading which are understood by staff. Workshops are also provided, particularly for new members of staff. Staff development in assessment is the responsibility of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit. Where provision includes study in a language other than English, the University ensures that appropriate arrangements for quality assurance of assessment are in place.

Setting and maintaining programme standards

1.4   There is sound evidence that practice and procedures for programme approval, monitoring and review follow University polices. Staff have a good understanding of the processes and timescales involved. Procedures are periodically reviewed and enhanced.

1.4.1   The University Senate is advised by the Curriculum Strategy Committee, following proposals from Departmental Committees. Arrangements for the development of or major changes to programmes, and proposals for programme closure or suspension, are clearly described and followed.

1.4.2   The Curriculum Strategy Committee (CSC) approves the levels of scrutiny required for new course proposals, the establishment of approval panels and the extent of externality required, which is normally two external subject specialists. Approval panels are chaired by a senior academic. Conditions of approval are signed off by the Chair prior to formal approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Senate. Initiatives for new programmes are normally department led. Informal networking, the relatively small size of the academic community and the cross-institutional roles of the Deputy Provosts facilitate the development of inter or multi-disciplinary programmes. New approvals and reviews of collaborative programmes are considered annually by the Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee of the CSC, which determines suitability of new and current collaborations in terms of the University's developing strategy for collaborative activities.

1.4.3   Departmental Operational Plans outline priorities for new programmes, report against the mission, vision and strategic aims of the University, and respond to specific issues on positioning, income enhancement/cost reduction, high quality student learning and enhancing student employability, and improving the student experience. This approach enables Senate both to gain an overview of University-wide developments and to compare and contrast departmental priorities.

1.4.4   Programmes are reviewed annually, and Departments undergo periodic quality assurance reviews every five to six years. Annual programme reviews report on academic standards, student learning opportunities and include detailed analysis of information on admissions, retention, progression and achievement, and the National Student Survey results. Areas for improvement are identified in an action plan. Periodic departmental reviews are chaired by a Deputy Provost, include external panel members, and involve scrutiny of whole departmental systems and issues arising from the previous annual programme reviews. The Academic Office ensures these arrangements are implemented consistently across the University.

1.4.5   Deputy Provosts report to the Curriculum Strategy Committee on strategic issues, and to the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee on good practice and operational matters arising from annual programme reviews. They also comment on the effectiveness of arrangements for annual programme review.

Subject benchmarks

1.5   The use of subject benchmark statements is an explicit element of programme approvals and programme specifications, evidenced by the documentation. External subject specialists comment on their use during approvals. The Academic Office provides appropriate guidance on the use of subject benchmark statements and other external reference points, such as those of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

1.5.1   The continuing appropriateness of programmes against these external reference points is monitored through the annual programme review process, especially through external examiner reports. For programmes recognised by PSRBs, the University prefers to organise joint approval events. PSRB reports are considered at relevant departmental committees and their outcomes reported to Senate.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

Outcome

The quality of learning opportunities at Roehampton University **meets UK expectations**. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Professional standards for teaching and learning

2.1 The University's approach to staff development provides a coherent and integrated framework to enhance student learning, and is **good practice**. There is a comprehensive approach to staff training and development. Where appropriate this is also applicable to staff at collaborative partners, placement areas and work-based learning providers. New staff are inducted and supported by experienced mentors. New staff comment very positively about the effect of mentoring on their transition into the University.

2.1.1 Teaching staff are required to undertake either a Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education or a Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA)-accredited course, unless they already hold an equivalent qualification. Teaching staff articulated an interest in, and understanding of, students' learning environments that was reflected by students. Teaching and learning also forms a strand of the promotion framework. Staff are required both to hold an appropriate standard of the UK Professional Standards and to demonstrate the impact of their teaching on student learning. Some are also required to hold fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. Those at Senior Lecturer level upwards must also demonstrate engagement with research in their teaching.

2.1.2 There are standard recruitment criteria for new academic staff, and since 2010 all academic appointment panels have been chaired by a Deputy Provost or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to ensure consistency. New appointees must hold a PhD or equivalent qualification, or in other ways demonstrate appropriate standing in their discipline.

2.1.3 The University also ensures that staff who supervise Research Degree students and those who have responsibility for supporting learning have access to tailored SEDA-recognised courses. However, not all postgraduate research students with teaching responsibilities had been trained. Students may undertake teaching either as part of their scholarship arrangements or as an 'associate lecturer'. Most students the team met had undertaken some training in preparation to teach, although they viewed such training as non-obligatory. Staff confirmed that there is no formal requirement for training for students who teach, although departments provide mentoring and guidance. The review team **recommends** that the University ensures that all postgraduate research students who teach undergo the appropriate level of training prior to the commencement of their teaching activity.

Learning resources

2.2 There are effective processes and structures in place to ensure delivery of the University's teaching, learning and assessment strategy and that students are able to meet their intended learning outcomes. Learning resources are monitored through annual programme reviews. Library staff liaise with departments and student representatives through Programme Boards. The Space Management Group maintains Oversight of teaching and learning spaces.

2.2.1   The results of the last National Student Survey (NSS) for the University showed a 16 per cent increase in student satisfaction with learning resources. Students confirmed that the virtual learning environment supports the achievement of their intended learning outcomes. Distance learning students were also satisfied with the resources readily available to them.

Student voice

2.3   Considerable efforts are made to ensure that students are able to engage with institutional quality mechanisms and processes, with an emphasis on students as co-creators of their learning experience. Student representatives can access training offered by the Students' Union. The Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit also has a role in training and supporting student representatives.

2.3.1   Student representatives sit on central committees, and the recently established Student Senate has created an additional forum in which students can effect change in the University. Within departments and programme areas, all students are invited to collaborate with staff through both formal and informal communications and committees. Much use is made of module feedback forms, and the annual learning and teaching conference ensures that good practice is shared across the institution. The staff-student partnership extends to elected officers of the Students' Union and senior managers of the University, and there is currently an interest in further developing the contribution of 'hard to reach' students in institutional quality. The collaboration between the Students' Union and the University in training student representatives, and through the Student Senate, to ensure that the student voice is supported and effectively responded to, is **good practice**.

2.3.2   The NSS results are considered as part of the annual monitoring and review processes, in which students are involved. There has been a marked increase in the University's NSS results over the last four years, which strongly indicates that the University has responded effectively to student feedback and enhanced the students' learning experiences.

2.3.3   There is no time frame within which policies and procedures that promote the contribution of students to quality assurance should be reviewed. The review team **recommends** that the University should establish a process for the systematic review of policies and procedures for promoting the contribution of students to quality assurance and enhancement.

Management information is used to improve quality and standards

2.4   The Planning Office prepares detailed reports analysing data from national student surveys at institutional, subject and programme levels showing outcomes, percentage changes over the previous year, and, at institutional level, sector-wide comparisons and a summary of results over the last five years. The reports additionally include qualitative comments from students.

2.4.1   The Planning Office also prepares regular reports on the Admissions cycle at institutional and departmental level, and by programme. Senior Departmental staff commented on the effectiveness and value of this information in programme monitoring and departmental planning. Staff also hold in high regard the quality and timeliness of the data produced on student cohort analysis, progression, withdrawal and achievement. Assessment Boards consider the performance of students at all sites offering University awards (including those offered through distance-learning) and external examiners are able to identify differential cohort achievement at the different sites.

2.4.2   The Deputy Provosts' report of the 2010-11 undergraduate annual programme reviews noted the potential for the greater use of data analysis. Programme Convenors are now making greater use of this during annual programme monitoring. There are comprehensive annual statistical reports with illustrative tables on complaints and appeals made to the Student Affairs Committee and the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee respectively.

2.4.3   Currently, data on postgraduate research programmes is analysed manually, although the University is developing its management information system to enable the Graduate School and Departments more effectively to monitor PGR progress, supervisions, achievement, periods of registrations, and to facilitate external comparisons. Staff acknowledged the need to make speedy progress in this regard. The review team **affirms** the development and use of the University's management information system for analysing and monitoring data on the progress of postgraduate research students.

Admission to the University

2.5   Admissions arrangements are clearly documented. The Admissions Policy has clear aims and principles, and sets out guidance on entry profiles, international admissions criteria, application procedures and the handling of applications, disability and dyslexia statements, and complaints. The policy is subject to an annual audit by the University auditors, which last reported that comprehensive policies and procedures are in place with ongoing refinement carried out annually. The annual audit of admissions arrangements is **good practice**.

2.5.1   A Recruitment and Admissions Group meets regularly and advises the Financial Strategy Group on detailed entry criteria, statistical data on applications, and on approving progression arrangements with collaborative partners.

2.5.2   The division of responsibilities between the centre and departments is clear. All admissions offers, including those for research degrees, are made centrally. Applications for research programmes are considered in detail by the relevant department, which advises the Admissions Office. The Graduate School checks that appropriate supervisors are available for research students. Research students reported positively on their admissions arrangements, which were well organised and helpful.

2.5.3   Information for students about courses, entry requirements and admissions procedures is transparent and helpful. Students confirmed the accuracy and clarity of pre-application information. They attested to the help they received from admissions staff. Distance-learning students in particular appreciate the clear and timely support they received during the admissions process. There are additional procedures for assisting applicants with disabilities. The Disabilities team contact all students who declare a disability and offer appropriate support through applications, admissions and induction.

Complaints and appeals

2.6   Procedures for complaints and appeals are succinct, clear and accessible, and their operation reflects close liaison between the University and the Students' Union, which provides support to students. Formal complaints and appeals are managed centrally by the Deputy University Secretary, who also offers guidance to students.

2.6.1   The Student Complaints Procedure describes arrangements succinctly and clearly. It summarises the various stages and timescales of the process and provides contact names. It advises students to seek the support of the Students' Union, and refers to the

Office of the Independent Adjudicator as the final resort. All parties seek to resolve matters informally at an early stage whenever possible. The personal tutorial system is additionally helpful in resolving matters at an early stage. Student representatives confirmed the close working relationship between the Students' Union and the University with respect to complaints. For collaborative provision, complaints procedures are normally those of the partner institution. Partners are required to clarify these arrangements in their documentation to students in programme handbooks.

2.6.2   Academic appeals are considered separately from complaints. The appeals process is available on the student regulations section of the University website, which again refers students to support from the Students' Union. The University's appeals arrangements normally apply to students on collaborative and distance-learning programmes.

2.6.3   The Student Affairs Committee receives annual analyses of complaints, supported by tables and charts illustrating numbers and types of complaint, departments (academic and service) against whom complaints are made, and the outcomes. A similar comprehensive annual report on appeals is made to the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee. These annual reports provide the University with the opportunity to reflect on the continuing appropriateness of its policies and arrangements.

Career advice and guidance

2.7   The University's Employability Strategy has been embraced across the institution, with departments adopting a variety of approaches in their subject areas. A comprehensive Employability Strategy links employability in the curriculum with advice from the Employability and Entrepreneurship Service, support from the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit, part-time employment, and volunteering opportunities.

2.7.1   A Student Employability Committee meets termly and involves five student members, representatives from teaching departments, and Student Affairs staff, to monitor the development and implementation of the Employability Strategy. It additionally considers resourcing, employability issues outside the curriculum, and employer engagement. It reports to Senate and to other University committees as appropriate. Students on undergraduate programmes were largely unaware of the Employability Strategy and in particular the embedding of employability skills within the curriculum. Staff endeavour to explain to students the broader role and place of generic skills within their programmes.

2.7.2   A review of central support for careers advice led to the establishment of the Employability and Entrepreneurship Service. The Service is welcomed by students and staff who acknowledged the expertise and guidance it provides. It produces a comprehensive Annual Report, which notes the increased use of the web for the promotion of careers related opportunities and the encouragement and facilitation of Departmental initiatives, and contains an ambitious development plan.

2.7.3   Employability Advisors work directly with departments to raise awareness and to develop initiatives for embedding employability in the curricula. Some departments use a traffic light system to highlight to students the prevalence of particular employability skills within modules. Additionally, Employment Advisors help students to prepare for work and further study; network with employers; access support for entrepreneurship and enterprise; and gain recognition for personal and professional development, which students appreciate. There are close working relationships between Programme Convenors and Employability Advisors in developing employability support for students. The complementary and mutually supportive roles of departments and Employability and Entrepreneurship Advisors in providing diverse and relevant employability support for students is **good practice**.

2.7.4   Departments are required to report on employability plans and priorities in their annual operating statements, which are a source for disseminating good practice, when discussed at Senate. Employability approaches and initiatives are reported in some but not all annual programme reviews. The University may wish to consider extending the sharing of good practice on employability initiatives by making an opportunity to report on employability matters more prominent in the annual programme review template.

Supporting disabled students

2.8   The Diversity and Equal Opportunities Committee is responsible for developing, reviewing and monitoring the Disability and Equal Opportunities Policy and the Disability Policy. It is chaired by the Registrar and University Secretary, and comprises senior staff, student representatives and Trade Union representatives. Equality and diversity policies relate to both students and staff and are comprehensive and clear. The Disability policy outlines key responsibilities for staff and students. It includes procedures for recruitment, retention and career development for staff with disabilities. It also details arrangements to support disabled students for admissions, teaching, assessment, retention and arrangements for the consideration of disability-related complaints.

2.8.1   All staff are required to attend equality and diversity training every three years. Records of participation are maintained centrally through Human Resources. Training programmes are provided by the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit.

2.8.2   The Disability Service encourages students to declare disabilities so that appropriate support can be provided throughout their time at the University. A network of departmental Disability Coordinators works with the Disability Service to provide additional support for individual students and share good practice through the Student Disability Forum. The Disability Service monitors its effectiveness through questionnaires and focus groups. Students with disabilities are offered tailored advice on careers and employment opportunities. The care and commitment of the disabilities team in their support for students with disabilities at admission, induction and through their programme is **good practice**.

2.8.3   The University monitors the academic progress and achievement of students with disabilities. The Deputy Provost's 2010-11 report on annual programme reviews revealed an inconsistent understanding of the University's disabilities policies. Staff confirmed the positive role of the Disability Coordinators in raising departmental awareness of disabilities issues. Programme Convenors make reasonable adjustments to learning, teaching and assessment methods on individual modules and/or programmes for individual students.

Supporting international students

2.9   International students are recruited through partner institutions or agents, for whom there is a clear and attractively produced guidance handbook. The University adopts a due diligence process for the selection of agents, who are trained and monitored by the International Office.

2.9.1   The International section of the website is comprehensive and detailed, and clearly relates the University's entry criteria to national qualifications in the countries of origin of most international students. A detailed explanation of English language requirements and routes to meeting them are clearly explained. The website also refers to University visits to the country, provides information on British Council and other local representatives and University contacts, and offers some student profiles. The International section of the website represents **good practice**.

2.9.2   Pre-departure and induction arrangements are of a high standard. Students confirmed that the website and specific pre-departure materials were helpful, and they welcomed the personal support of staff in arranging transport from the airport and campus tours ahead of the dedicated four-day orientation programme on arrival. A similar orientation programme is available to 'Study Abroad' students. Student Services offer individual guidance and support to international students on cultural, financial and study matters throughout their stay at the University as needs arise.

2.9.3   International students are offered support by the English Language Unit. Non-native English speakers are offered a diagnostic assessment and the Unit offers follow-up sessions throughout the year. International students may register for English Language Academic Writing modules that may count towards the student's accumulation of credit at undergraduate level. Research students may also join these courses on a voluntary basis. The modules combine generic writing skills with a number of short assignments related directly to a student's academic subject area. These modules were highly regarded by taught and research students, and by Programme Convenors. The availability of effective academic writing modules at different academic levels for international students is **good practice**. The University may wish to keep under review the ability of the Unit to support international students, if the University increases the recruitment of international students likely to enrol on academic writing modules.

Supporting postgraduate research students

2.10   The University has a growing research culture. A doctoral qualification is normally required for most new lecturers and research publications or other research outputs are required for appointment or promotion to higher grades. The University has a number of Research Centres which act as focal points for research activity.

2.10.1   The arrangements for overseeing postgraduate research students is effective. Students sit within the relevant academic department, and are overseen by the University-wide Graduate School. Students acknowledged a sense of belonging to the Graduate School as well as to their relevant department. The Graduate School Committee is a committee of Senate and oversees the work of the school. The Graduate School is responsible for delivery of research skills training and has recently adopted the Vitae Research Development Framework.

2.10.2   A substantial review of arrangements for research students was undertaken in 2011 to align the University's oversight of postgraduate research with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. There are separate regulations and procedures for research doctorates and professional doctorates. The research regulations were revised and expanded in 2011-12. The professional doctorate arrangements are being reviewed during the current academic year. Progress and Review arrangements are largely managed at departmental level and reported to the Research Degrees Board. The University has a clear structure in place to monitor the progress and achievement of postgraduate research students at department level by the Research Student Review Panels, and at University level by the Research Degrees Board.

2.10.3   The extensive Research Degrees Handbook covers supervision, progress monitoring, upgrade of or changes to registration status, and examination. Postgraduate research students are aware of this handbook and have easy access to it. There is an induction day for new postgraduate researchers and the postgraduate research handbook contains much of the information relating to postgraduate research students. The University operates a postgraduate research 'buddy scheme' for new postgraduate researchers.

2.10.4   The Research Ethics Committee sets University ethics policies and procedures, and departments a play a central role in the administration of those procedures and in decision making. Students are aware of the requirements for gaining ethical clearance before commencing their research.

2.10.5   Training is required for research student supervisors, which may take place in advance or alongside their first supervision. Staff confirmed that experienced supervisors are required to engage in relevant continuing professional development upon completion of the standard supervisor training. Research students may undertake teaching either as part of the scholarship arrangements or as an associate lecturer. Most, though not all, students had undertaken some training in preparation to teach. There is no University-wide policy on a requirement for training for postgraduate research students who teach, as it depends on their prior experience. However, departments do provide mentoring and guidance.

Learning delivered through collaborative arrangements

2.11   The University website provides easy access to information relating to the management of collaborative arrangements, including guidelines for the approval and managing of collaborative arrangements. Staff demonstrated a clear awareness of these guidelines. The register of collaborative partners outlines a number of arrangements, of which most are listed as validations. Other arrangements include joint provision, off-site delivery and franchises. At the time of the review, the published list of partners contained two omissions. The review team **recommends** that the University ensures that its published list of collaborative partners is complete and up to date.

2.11.1   The University's auditors conducted a review of collaborative arrangements in February 2011, which returned a 'satisfactory' level of assurance. While the report was positive overall, a number of recommendations were made, which have been considered at University level and a response made.

2.11.2   The Curriculum Strategy Committee holds responsibility for collaborative arrangements and approves changes to the portfolio. The Committee ensures due diligence is undertaken and is responsible for formal agreements. Formal signed agreements are expected to be in place prior to the start of a collaboration. At one recent renewal, the agreement was not signed until June 2012, although students were enrolled on the programme at the start of that academic year. The review team **recommends** that the University puts in place systems to ensure that a legally-binding, signed agreement is in force for all collaborative programmes, prior to enrolling students.

2.11.3   Once the partnerships have been established, most of the operational responsibility for managing collaborative arrangements is carried out at department level, and monitored centrally. An annual summary of all collaborative arrangements is submitted to the Collaborative Provision Sub-committee of the Curriculum Strategy Committee. The annual summary includes information from the relevant programme annual review and from external examiners. Each collaborative programme is reviewed every five to six years, usually in the year prior to the one in which renewal is to be considered.

2.11.4   University guidelines state that both certificates and transcripts will normally record at which institution the student pursued his or her programme of study as well as the awarding institution. The University takes clear steps to ensure that the place and, where appropriate, language, of study is indicated on certificates; however, not all transcripts carry all of this information. While the University's practice is in line with the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, the University may wish to consider adhering more closely to its own stated policy.

Flexible, distributed and e-learning

2.12   Distance learning students consistently reported that the information they received prior to the start of their study, and during their course, is very good. All these students knew who to contact with any problems. They were very positive about their experiences of studying for University programmes online and in other countries. Students reported that information on the virtual learning environment is clear and accessible.

2.12.1   Efforts are made to maintain strong communications with students regardless of their mode of study, and those on distance learning courses consistently fed back that both course delivery and learner support exceeded their expectations.

2.12.2   Distance-learning programmes are managed centrally both through annual monitoring processes and through the Flexible and Distance Learning Working Group. The programmes are validated in the same way as other University programmes, and relevant due diligence and quality assurance procedures are followed. Staff review student feedback as the key quality assurance mechanism for learning materials, and students commented favourably on the quality of those they received. However, there is no formal process for quality assuring learning materials before they are presented to students. The review team **recommends** that the University should establish formal arrangements to quality assure distance-learning materials in advance of their being adopted on a programme.

Work-based and placement learning

2.13   Placements are largely managed through the Employability and Entrepreneurship Service. The Schools Partnership Office manages placements for initial teacher education. Terms of responsibility for the students, University, and placement provider are set out in the relevant handbooks. Students reported that the information they receive is clear and sufficient.

2.13.1   Placements are monitored by Link tutors or appropriate teaching staff who will visit the sites. Where appropriate, the University provides development opportunities for staff involved with placements and work-based learning. The University relies on placement hosts to advise on the physical suitability of and provision of relevant support at their sites, although department staff visit placement sites and take into account their suitability for their students.

2.13.2   In the School of Education, there were insufficient placement opportunities for undergraduate students at the time specified in the curriculum. Some students opted to undertake their placement at the end of the academic year, but this impacted on their revision and examination preparation. The shortage of placements is likely to continue in this area, due to wider changes outside of the University's control. The review team **recommends** that that University reviews its management of work based and placement learning to ensure that all students have access to sufficient, suitable and timely opportunities.

Student charter

2.14   The University's student charter is known as the Student Partnership. This document clearly states what students should expect, what is expected of them, and signposts them to complaints and appeals processes and the relevant contacts. The document does not distinguish between modes of study or types of student and thereby encompasses all students of the University.

2.14.1   However, the Student Partnership was difficult to find on the University website, and students and staff were generally unaware of it. The review team **recommends** that the University should develop a clear communications and dissemination plan for the Student Partnership, in collaboration with students.

3   Information about learning opportunities

Summary

The information about learning opportunities produced by the University **meets UK expectations**. The intended audience finds the information about the learning opportunities offered is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The team's reasons for this conclusion are given below.

3.1   The University website contains comprehensive and consistent course listings showing entry requirements, UCAS points, fee levels, a year-by-year summary of the programme, assessment and teaching methods, and provides a link to full programme details.

3.2   Information on the application and admissions processes to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of study is clear and accessible. Entrance requirements for home and overseas students are set out clearly, including English language requirements. Signposting for further information is clear, provides contact details for the admissions office and includes links to the UCAS website. Students commented on the usefulness and thoroughness of pre-arrival and induction information.

3.3   The key information sets and wider information sets are available on the University web pages for each programme and are easily accessible. Programme pages also hold clear information on programme structure and modules, teaching and assessment methods, facilities on and off campus, and reading suggestions. Additionally, there is clear information on links with businesses and industry, relevant professional and statutory regulatory bodies, and career destinations of graduates from each programme.

3.4   Students are informed when changes are made that affect them. Students noted that communication by staff about such changes is well managed.

3.5   External Examiner reports for taught programmes are posted on the virtual learning environment for students to read. They are prominently displayed on each programme site, although students and student representatives did not appear to be familiar with them.

4   Enhancement of learning opportunities

Outcome

The enhancement of learning opportunities at Roehampton University **meets UK expectations**. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

4.1   There is a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning across the University, which is clearly understood by staff as an institutional priority at all levels. Enhancement activity is reflected in the Strategic Plan 2011-2014. Staff gave examples of how departmental and institutional enhancement initiatives are aligned. The University may wish to consider formally drawing together its overall approach to enhancement to provide a clearer framework within which its diverse but coherent practice can be set.

4.2	The work of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit (the Unit) in supporting all staff and students to address any problems and to enhance student learning, is **good practice**. The Unit fulfils a number of functions and has a clear enhancement role. It operates an 'informal' mentoring scheme and provides bespoke training sessions and away days. It assists staff with applications for National and University Teaching fellowships. Staff spoke very positively of the Unit and gave precise examples of enhancement-related activity that has been undertaken at department level and more generally. The Unit engages extensively with the Professional Standards Framework more widely as a strategic way of seeking to enhance student learning opportunities.

4.3	The Unit organises an annual conference designed to promote the enhancement of learning and teaching across the University. The 2012 conference addressed the issue of 'Students = consumers, customers, collaborators? Engaging students in a time of change', demonstrating one way in which there is an institutional-level, strategic discussion on the issue of student engagement in learning and teaching. Annual peer observation of teaching includes an enhancement dimension, and is also supported by the Unit. Academic managers stressed that peer review was seen at the University primarily as an enhancement tool rather than one directed narrowly to address problems.

4.4	Learning and Teaching is given a high status at the University, demonstrated by its own Teaching Fellowship Scheme and its support for staff in applications for external recognition in teaching. Learning and teaching is a factor in peer observation and promotion opportunities. New full-time academic staff are required to complete the University of Roehampton Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and those on 0.7 or less complete the Staff and Educational Development Association Introduction to Supporting Learning and Teaching course. These courses are open to other staff such as postgraduate research students who teach, and library staff. These development opportunities are clearly spelt out, understood by staff and monitored effectively.

4.5	Good practice is identified and disseminated through programme annual reviews, the learning and teaching conference, through scrutiny of external examiner reports, and through the wider work of the Leaning and Teaching Enhancement Unit.

4.6	Student feedback is regularly evaluated and other relevant data is analysed from an enhancement perspective. The Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee considers data with enhancement goals in mind. Academic staff and managers gave examples of how the planning office was able to supply focused and timely data to support enhancement initiatives.

# 5	Thematic element

Each academic year a specific theme relating to higher education provision in England and Northern Ireland is chosen for especial attention by QAA's Institutional Review teams. In 2012-13 there is a choice of two themes: First Year Student Experience or Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The review team investigated student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement at Roehampton University. The University has developed its opportunities for student engagement with quality assurance and enhancement processes, which are now well embedded at all levels of the University. Teaching staff and academic managers are very aware of student involvement and engagement with quality assurance and enhancement at all levels and student views are taken seriously.

Innovations in student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement

5.1 The Student Senate is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and consists of student representatives from across the University. The Senate has a budget of £50,000 which students choose to allocate to activities that will enhance student learning. Staff and students confirmed that the Senate is a positive development, which allows students to set their priorities for additional resources.

5.1.1 Student-led teaching awards are coordinated by the Students' Union and offer students an opportunity to nominate members of staff who have supported their learning and teaching. Awards are publically recognised by the University.

5.1.2 There is an annual programme representatives' conference, and students attend the annual Learning and Teaching conference alongside academic staff, where they have made presentations, for example with regard to dissertation groups.

Student contributions to enhancement

5.2 The University recently reviewed the student representatives' system to develop a consistent approach at all levels of the institution and to develop further the student representatives' training programme. In 2012 a record number of representatives were trained, including more taught postgraduate students. Student representatives receive training led by the Students' Union, which includes University input from the Academic Office on quality assurance and enhancement issues, and from the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit on the personal skills required of a successful representative, including negotiation skills. A comprehensive Programme Representatives Booklet contains advice on the role, including a skills checklist.

5.2.1 There is comprehensive student membership of committees at all levels of the University. Learning support and employability staff sit on various committees with student membership, including programme and departmental committees, to hear students' views directly.

5.2.2 Student representatives participate in programme approval, annual programme reviews and periodic programme reviews. Participation on committees is clearly set out in the training for representatives. Four research student representatives sit on the Graduate School Committee. Research students' views are also gathered in departments through a range of formal and informal mechanisms including surveys, supervisory meetings and informal discussions.

Staff perceptions of/participation in student involvement in quality

5.3 The Student's Union President and Vice-President (Education) meet monthly with University representatives from professional services, with fortnightly meetings with the Deputy Director of Academic Services. An annual meeting is held between University staff and students on partnership programmes to discuss issues arising from their learning experience. Students affirm the value of these meetings.

5.3.1 University staff indentified the benefits accrued by the high level of engagement with students to enable them to provide constructive feedback. The recent improvement in participation rates in student surveys in comparison with other London-based institutions was cited as an example of enhanced student engagement.

5.3.2   Staff and students confirm that students' views contribute to the annual programme review process through evaluations and also through student members of programme boards.

Acting on student contributions and 'closing the feedback loop'

5.4   The Students' Union has regular meetings with University senior staff, including the Vice-Chancellor. The University works closely with the Students' Union to achieve developments and a good working relationship is in place.

5.4.1   There is a comprehensive evaluation process including end of module questionnaires. Some students have expressed concerns about the confidentiality of their evaluations, as many are completed by groups of students, observed by teaching staff. However, electronic module evaluation has not had such high response rates.

5.4.2   Module evaluations provide evidence for Programme Annual Reviews. They are also considered in departments. Responses to issues can be made by members of staff or student representatives in meetings. Students on distance learning programmes confirmed that they have opportunities to feed back their views and get responses. Outcomes of annual programme reviews are considered through processes which involve students, including programme boards and departmental committees. Overview reports from the Deputy Provosts are considered by committees with student membership.

5.4.3   There are a range of opportunities in departments and at programme level for student representatives and other students to meet with staff to discuss issues, which are effective in enabling students' views to be obtained, and staff responses are reported back to students.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to key terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Most terms also have formal 'operational' definitions. For example, pages 18-19 of the handbook for this review method give formal definitions of: threshold academic standards; learning opportunities; enhancement; and public information.

The handbook can be found on the QAA website at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/ireni-handbook.aspx.

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality:
www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx.

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx.

Academic Infrastructure Guidance developed and agreed by the higher education community and published by QAA, which is used by institutions to ensure that their courses meet national expectations for academic standards and that students have access to a suitable environment for learning (academic quality). It consists of four groups of reference points: the **frameworks for higher education qualifications**, the **subject benchmark statements**, the **programme specifications** and the **Code of practice**. Work is underway (2011-12) to revise the Academic Infrastructure as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

academic standards The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

Code of practice *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* published by QAA: a set of interrelated documents giving guidance for higher education institutions.

credit(s) A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education programmes of study, expressed as 'numbers of credits' at a specific level.

enhancement Taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of **learning opportunities**. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

feature of good practice A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

framework A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

framework for higher education qualifications A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*.

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned **programmes of study**, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios) and staff development.

learning outcome What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

operational definition A formal definition of a term, which establishes exactly what QAA means when using it in reports.

programme (of study) An approved course of study which provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

programme specifications Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of **programmes of study**, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

public information Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is being developed from 2011 to replace the **Academic Infrastructure** and will incorporate all its key elements, along with additional topics and overarching themes.

subject benchmark statement A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

threshold academic standard The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the **subject benchmark statements** and national qualifications frameworks. Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also **academic standard**.

widening participation Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.