University of West London

Institutional audit

March 2011

Annex to the report

Contents

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of West London (the University) from 14 to 18 March 2011 to carry out an Institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the learning opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards the University offers.

Outcomes of the Institutional audit

As a result of its investigations, the audit team's view of the University of West London is that:

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

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The audit team found that the University takes deliberate steps to improve the quality of the student learning experience through the coherence and effective implementation at all levels of its Strategic Plan and through its associated strategies for Learning, Teaching and Assessment; Research and Scholarship; and Enterprise and Employer Engagement.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

The University'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 by QAA, and are operating as intended.

Published information

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

Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas of good practice:

- the improvements in institution-wide communication (paragraphs 7, 63)
- the University's promotion of employer engagement and employability across the curriculum (paragraph 56)
- the high quality of external educational opportunities offered to students (paragraph 57)
- the collaborative link tutors' active involvement with partner institutions and their students, and the constructive use of tutor reports by the University to enhance its collaborative partnerships (paragraph 77).

Recommendations for action

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

Recommendations for action that the team considers advisable:

- ensure consistency in faculty procedures for the annual monitoring of programme reviews, and in the faculty monitoring of external examiners' reports and the responses made to them (paragraph 24)
- ensure that all transcripts or certificates for collaborative students make reference to the name of the partner institution and location of study, in line with the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* (paragraph 78).

Recommendations for action that the team considers desirable:

- respond to students in a more timely, informative and coherent manner on the actions arising from student feedback and consultation (paragraph 37)
- consider how it might strengthen its existing public information about the management of the quality and standards of its programmes (paragraph 93).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1   The University of West London has its origins in the merger of a number of London colleges, including the former Ealing College of Higher Education, whose history reached back to 1860. In 1991 the newly formed merged institution was inaugurated as the Polytechnic of West London, and in the following year full university status was granted as Thames Valley University. Following a major reappraisal of the identity and strategy of the University in 2008-10, the new title of the University of West London was approved by the Privy Council and adopted in April 2011.

2   In 2009-10 the University had a total of 10,316 full-time equivalent students, of which 9,370 were studying undergraduate programmes, 896 were following taught postgraduate programmes, and 65 were registered as postgraduate research students. The University had 1,270 undergraduate students following collaborative partnership programmes, with 198 of these being taught overseas. The University has just over 1,000 staff in total, of whom around 550 are full and part-time academic staff. The University has three faculties: the Faculty of Health and Sciences, the Faculty of the Arts, and the Faculty of Professional Studies. Within these faculties sit a total of eight schools, which are divided into fields of study. In addition, there is a Graduate School for taught postgraduate and postgraduate research students, and the Institute for Teaching, Innovation and Learning, which has no school, but its own field of study in Higher Education and Research Skills. The three faculties of the University offer qualifications in art and design, business, computing, healthcare, hospitality, human sciences, law, nursing, media, midwifery, music and performing arts, psychology, social care, technology and tourism.

3   The University's mission is 'to raise aspiration through the pursuit of excellence'. The University's strategy prioritises flexible provision for students of all ages and backgrounds, with a strong emphasis on employer engagement and the generation, application and transfer of knowledge. As part of its core objectives at the time of the audit,

the University aimed to enhance recruitment, retention, completion and employability and to modernise its business processes.

The information base for the audit

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

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

6   In addition, the audit team had access to:

- the report of the previous Institutional audit (2005)
- a report on an overseas audit of the University's partnership with the Informatics Open Institute in Hong Kong (2007)
- the report on the mid-cycle follow-up (2008) to the previous Institutional audit
- a range of the University's internal documents, as requested by the team
- the notes of the audit team's meetings with staff and students.

Developments since the last audit

7   The University has itself acknowledged both the depth and the intensity of institutional change since the 2005 Institutional audit, and in particular during the three years up to 2011. Over this period the University reviewed its financial status and the range and quality of its provision, and as a result made a major reassessment of its multiple-campus organisation. The necessary changes following the strategic repositioning required a demanding level of change management, centred upon effective communication across the institution. A range of measures have been introduced to strengthen existing networks and to establish new lines of communication. The Vice-Chancellor holds regular all staff meetings; practice-orientated networks have been set up for major areas of activity (for instance the Quality Network); committee attendance has been systematically monitored and regulated, and management information and its use have been reviewed and enhanced. Many of the meetings between the audit team and students and staff provided evidence to substantiate the University's broad belief that both local and institutional-level communications had significantly matured, and were now reinforcing new synergies between individuals, committees, networks and groups. The team found that the streamlining and realignment of governance and executive and deliberative structures, as well as the efficient management of quality and standards within the University, had contributed significantly to improving cross-university dialogue. The audit team identified as an area of good practice these planned and systematic improvements in institution-wide communication.

8   The audit team found that the University has responded systematically and comprehensively to the findings of the Institutional audit report in November 2005. This was attributable not least to the major reorganisation and restructuring which had taken place during the past three years within the context of institutional strategic priorities, but also mindful of the audit report recommendations. The University has continued to support its students' academic development in fruitful ways, for example in the range of external

activities it provides for them and in its sustained focus on employability and employer engagement. The University has taken other actions, in part as a consequence of the 2005 audit report. Specifically, the University reviewed its committee structure to reinforce logical connectedness between subcommittees and groups and their parent committees. In this context an Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) was established. Taking into account the 2005 Institutional audit recommendation on the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and associated faculty strategies, the current audit team noted that the strategy is now used as a pivotal document driving quality and enhancement in learning and teaching, and is monitored effectively and regularly through the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee.

9   The University has responded in appropriate ways to the 2005 recommendation in the Institutional audit concerning collaborative provision and assessment within partner institutions. The University has established a Collaborative Partnerships Steering Group and introduced a Collaborative Handbook, both of which are discussed in Section 5 of this report, as is the University's response to the May 2007 QAA report on the University and Informatics Open Institute, Hong Kong.

10   The University has responded to the 2005 Institutional audit report's remaining recommendations by implementing a number of other measures: the University now has an institutional framework for students' personal development planning (PDP), and stated that PDP is 'widely though not yet universally adopted throughout (its) curriculum'. The audit team found that PDP has greater currency and reach within the University than previously, and that the accompanying measures in staff development have been appropriate. The University has revised its procedures for validation, monitoring and review of programmes. While the team has noted some inconsistency in the record keeping of the developmental or 'first stage' of the new validation system, it also found that the new arrangements represent a significant advance from the period of the last Institutional audit and that validation within the University is both rigorous and developmental. The University has both amended and enhanced its policy and approaches governing feedback to students on their assessed work. The audit team heard from students and staff that the new assessment feedback policy is working well, and that when student submissions are, exceptionally, returned outside the newly implemented 15-day timescale clear advance warnings and an accompanying rationale are given to students. The University is deploying appropriate levels of diagnostic, formative and summative feedback in its overall approach to improving students' learning experiences.

11   The audit team explored points of likely interest from the QAA mid-cycle follow-up report and noted in particular the following developments: the operation of the revised governance structure and committee arrangements, the revisions to the management of quality and standards, and the work of the Collaborative Partnerships Steering Group. The team also found that the University had responded appropriately to the findings of the July 2006 QAA review of research degree programmes.

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

12   The University's key mechanisms for assuring quality and standards (including collaborative partnerships) are: academic regulations; programme validation and approval; annual and periodic field review; annual monitoring reports; collaborative provision arrangements; student evaluations and surveys; internal audits; external examiners; and assessment boards.

13   The University's Academic Board has overall responsibility for the assurance of academic standards and the security of the University's awards. The Academic Board discharges this responsibility by means of appropriate delegation to the senior academic committees reporting to it, most notably AQSC and its subcommittees, the Collaborative Partnerships Steering group and External Examiners Appointment Committee. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC) and Research, Scholarship and Enterprise Committee are the other two senior committees which report to the Academic Board, and these are the key deliberative bodies with responsibility for enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities and for promoting research, scholarship and enterprise across the University. The focal point for the executive management of the University is the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group. This body meets weekly to oversee the effective day-to-day management of the University, and receives reports from faculties and services. Once a month its membership is expanded to include all heads of Central Units, forming the Senior Management Group. Membership of these groups includes the deputy and pro vice-chancellors, the deans of faculty and managers of the University services. Faculties and schools have their own executive groups. In addition to these formal committees, the University has established more informal networks, which contribute to the cascading process within the institution as well as offering regular opportunities for the sharing of ideas within the respective networks' remits.

14   AQSC agrees and oversees the University's quality assurance and improvement processes, including the appointment and reporting of external examiners; annual monitoring; validations and reviews; student evaluations; external inspections; reviews and accreditation visits. It also formulates academic policy and approves the regulatory framework. From its consideration of minutes and discussions with staff, the audit team confirmed that AQSC was working well in managing academic standards, contributing alongside other committees to students' learning opportunities and serving as a key institutional lever for the quality cascading process with the University. As the other main committee concerned with the quality of the student experience, LTAC determines policy and initiatives on learning, teaching and assessment including employer engagement. The committee develops, monitors and evaluates the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and shares good practice.

15   The Academic Quality and Standards Office, overseen by the Director of Academic Quality and Standards, coordinates and monitors the implementation of the University's quality assurance framework. It publishes the Quality Handbook, which provides guidance on the University's structures and processes in the context of the Academic Infrastructure, coordinates links with external examiners and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, and compiles summary overview reports on quality and standards for consideration by senior committees. The Institute for Teaching, Innovation and Learning provides academic development in teaching and technology-enhanced learning that is closely aligned to the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Further support within faculties is provided by learning, teaching and assessment coordinators, by teaching fellows, technology-enhanced learning champions, work-based learning fellows, and enterprise fellows.

16   Each of the three faculties has a faculty board, which has overall responsibility for the maintenance of standards and quality; learning, teaching and assessment strategy; and research, enterprise and scholarship strategy at a faculty level. Each faculty also has a Faculty Academic Quality and Standards Committee (FAQSC), a Faculty Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (FLTAC), and a Faculty Research, Scholarship and Enterprise Committee. Acting on behalf of the faculty board, FAQSCs and FLTACs undertake detailed scrutiny of quality assurance (including external examiners' reports, annual monitoring, validations and reviews) and the effectiveness of the learning, teaching and assessment strategy respectively within each faculty. Programme committees undertake detailed

monitoring of programmes including academic standards, reporting to school boards, which in turn report to faculty boards and to AQSC.

17   The Academic Board receives an annual overview report on academic standards with summary information by faculty and mode, and a subsequent mid-year report on actions taken to address issues identified. The minutes indicate thorough consideration by the board of issues relating to standards. The audit team was able broadly to confirm the accuracy of the University's view that the interplay of central and faculty responsibilities constitutes a strength, promoting devolution and local ownership while retaining central oversight, and ensuring a common framework with consistent requirements across the institution. The balance between the levels at which processes operate depends upon the location of primary responsibility, administrative efficiency and the level of perceived risk. The audit found that the University had an appropriate framework for the secure management of academic standards and quality.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

18   New programme proposals must be approved in principle by the head of school, faculty executive and the Vice-Chancellor's Executive, taking account of the programme's rationale and academic justification, resource availability, likely demand, viability, and strategic fit. Full programme approval takes place at two levels: there is an initial faculty scrutiny, which is formative and developmental, and which may involve external subject specialist(s); this is then followed by a formal summative event. Besides consideration of a detailed supporting case for the programme, this requires the submission of module and programme specifications and the draft programme handbook. Panel members include University staff with relevant expertise, at least one external subject specialist and, where appropriate, representatives from business, industry and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). The committee chair, typically a senior academic from another faculty, is trained and licensed by the University, and a member of the Academic Quality and Standards Office (AQSO) attends as adviser. Taking account of the proposed curriculum and assessment, resources, the programme's currency and validity, and its design in relation to the Academic Infrastructure, the panel decides whether to approve, approve with recommendations, to require resubmission, or to reject the proposal. Framework validation events, involving the reconfiguration of existing programmes into new routes and/or awards using existing modules, attract a lighter touch, as do free-standing Certificates of Personal and Professional Development. Detailed guidance for the chair, internal and external members of validation panels is provided in the Quality Handbook. The audit team reviewed documentation for the programme approval process, including the reports of second stage panels, and concluded that the process made an effective contribution to the management of academic standards.

19   The academic field is the basic unit for annual review. Fields are clusters of cognate academic programmes. There are 23 fields across the University, varying in size from four to 23 programmes. Large fields are divided where necessary into sub-fields for the purposes of review. Module leaders prepare brief reports for programme and field leaders, incorporating tutors' views, student evaluations, assessment results, and external examiners' comments, together with a summary of actions in response to these. Programme leaders use these in turn to compile programme reports, which are formally considered by the programme team before forwarding to the field leader, where they form the key documents for Annual Field Review. This is a minimum half-day event which AQSO and Students' Union officers may

attend, involving heads of school, field and programme leaders, the lead external examiner and student representatives, and chaired by a senior faculty member. The review is reported to the Faculty Academic Quality and Standards Committee (FAQSC) and thence to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC). The audit team noted different levels of rigour and attention to Annual Field Review reports across the three faculties and in consequence recommends that the University should strengthen institutional oversight of the faculty monitoring process to ensure greater consistency (see paragraph 24). Schools include a section on academic standards in their annual report to AQSC and, drawing on these, AQSO then prepares an annual summary report on academic standards for the Academic Board.

20   Periodic Field Review (PFR) and revalidation, normally occurring every five years and including any externally validated components or programmes, is usually a full-day event, managed and monitored by AQSO. Again, fields are divided into sub-fields as necessary for the appropriate management of the review. PFR includes consideration of programme specifications and handbooks; module study guides; programme, field and school annual reports; external examiner's reports and responses; student evaluations and National Student Survey outcomes; samples of students' work; and a meeting with a representative group of students. The review involves the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs on behalf of the faculty, while the chair is from another faculty and the panel includes at least one external subject specialist who is not a current or recent external examiner, and a student representative. The panel reviews the currency of programme content and delivery and the effectiveness of implementation, and undertakes a risk analysis to reach judgements on academic standards and learning opportunities that range from 'confidence' through 'confidence with exceptions', 'limited confidence' or 'no confidence'. Recommendations must be categorised as essential, advisable or desirable. PFR reports are considered by the FAQSC, which also monitors responses to any recommendations. Additionally, a summary report of progress in implementing PFR recommendations is prepared annually by AQSO for consideration by AQSC. The University has recently conducted an evaluation of the PFR process, concluding that it provides a uniform framework for academic programme evaluation that draws on an extensive evidence base, promotes coherent curriculum planning and management, and allows the widest stakeholder participation. The audit team read several periodic review reports of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and judged the process to make an effective contribution to the management of academic standards.

21   The University retains an internal audit capability, allowing for out-of-cycle reviews to deal with sensitive issues, unexpected developments and/or areas of perceived risk. This provision had not been implemented recently and, in the University's view, should now only very rarely, if ever, be needed, given the improvements to the University's management information and the robustness of its quality assurance framework.

External examiners

22   External examiners, who have a particular responsibility for scrutinising standards, normally serve for four years, with exceptional extension for a fifth. They are nominated by programme leaders, endorsed by heads of schools and by FAQSCs on behalf of faculty boards, and appointed by the External Examiner Appointment Committee on behalf of the Academic Board. The AQSO organises an annual central induction event for new external examiners, which they must attend. This acquaints them with University requirements, and assessment and quality assurance processes. In addition, heads of school or field leaders are responsible for detailed subject briefings. They also draft an Annual Written Agreement with each external examiner, specifying their duties with respect to curriculum coverage, sampling and attendance at Assessment Boards; these are copied to faculties and AQSO

and monitored thereafter. External examiners attend module assessment boards, award boards and at least one student progress board per year. They need not attend resit boards but must moderate resit assessment and approve marks following the board meeting.

23   External examiners submit their reports to the Vice-Chancellor via the Director of Academic Quality and Standards. AQSO then distributes their reports to faculties and to relevant collaborative partners; external examiners may also report directly to the Vice-Chancellor on any concerns about standards or performance, especially if assessment processes jeopardise the fair treatment of students or the standards of University awards. A sample of external examiners' reports examined by the audit team showed them to judge the University's academic standards to be comparable to those in other UK higher education institutions. They also provided evidence of effective and constructive communication between external examiners and academic staff at module, programme and field levels in calibrating and monitoring academic standards. The audit team considered that, in general, the University's use of independent external examiners is scrupulous and makes an effective contribution to the management of academic standards.

24   Heads of school or field leaders are responsible, after consultation with programme leaders, for responding to external examiners' reports, giving summaries of actions taken; these are monitored by FAQSCs for faculty boards. In addition, AQSO summarises external examiners' reports and provides an annual overview for AQSC and FAQSCs. In two of the faculties (the Faculty of Professional Studies and the Faculty of the Arts) FAQSCs critically review reports of annual programme reviews, external examiners' reports, and responses to these; the FAQSC review reports are appropriately detailed. However, the audit team was unable to find any evidence that a corresponding critical review had been undertaken in the Faculty of Health and Sciences. In view of this, the team concluded that it was advisable for the University to ensure consistency in faculty procedures for the annual monitoring of programme reviews, and of external examiners' reports and the responses made to them.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

25   The Quality Handbook summarises the Academic Infrastructure including the precepts of the *Code of practice*. Sections of the handbook make clear that relevant aspects of the Academic Infrastructure inform and calibrate module and programme proposals for initial validation, and thereafter for annual monitoring and periodic review. External examiners are specifically invited to comment on the suitability and congruence of learning outcomes with national subject benchmarks, and with the level and qualification descriptors of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The University has 45 programmes accredited by PSRBs, most in the faculties of Professional Studies and Health and Human Sciences, and works with a wide range of employer organisations that contribute to the design and review of programmes and to work-based learning activities. Relevant PSRB representatives are normally involved in joint validations of programmes and joint periodic reviews thereafter. Programme teams are responsible for recording PSRB involvement and reporting this and any changes in PSRB requirements to faculties and the AQSO. Again, external examiners are invited to comment on students' academic standards in relation to relevant PSRB requirements.

26   The Quality Handbook deals specifically with quality assurance and employer engagement, especially in relation to work-based and placement learning, detailing the responsibilities of the University and its partners and the responsibilities and entitlements of students, with a focus on guidance, support and assessment. The Quality Handbook also provides protocols for the accreditation of in-company training courses, with particular emphasis on learning outcomes and their assessment. Liaison between the University and the partner is via the faculty Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L)

Coordinator; course approval, normally for three years with annual reports, is by the faculty AP(E)L Committee. With new partners the University insists on setting or agreeing assignments and marking scripts; if, with experience, it judges there to be minimal risk it may delegate more assessment processes to the partner, but always moderates scripts. External examiners have full access to scripts and agree assignments and marks.

27   The audit team concluded that the University's use of the Academic Infrastructure and other reference points makes an effective contribution to the management of academic standards.

Assessment policies and regulations

28   All undergraduate programmes and most postgraduate and professional education programmes are modularised, and all conform to the University's general assessment regulations for awards, with specific variations to meet PSRB requirements. The University has recently revised some aspects of its compensation and progression regulations. Academic policies and regulations, and details of the structure and regulations for undergraduate and postgraduate modular credit accumulation schemes, are provided in hard copy to students in the Student Handbook and its supplements. Assessment regulations, including those covering mitigation, compensation and collaborative programmes, and those covering student complaints and academic offences, are scrutinised by the Student Academic Regulations Review Group reporting to the Academic Board.

29   It is University policy for all examination scripts to be anonymously marked and, wherever practicable and feasible without unduly constraining assessment design, for written assignments also to be anonymously marked. The University Assessment Policy and Guidance was last revised in May 2010 to take account of revisions for the conduct of examinations, the assessment of students with disabilities and for assessing work-based and placement learning. The policy and guidance on procedures for invigilation, the conduct of examinations and assessment, together with good practice guides to assessment design and marking, are available on the staff intranet and for students on the AQSO area of the University's virtual learning environment.

Management information - statistics

30   The University has recently made significant improvements to its communication infrastructure and the quality of management information with the introduction and expansion of Unit-e as the database holding records of student performance, progression matrices and rulesets. Data on student achievement is now more widely available to academic staff, is used by faculties to inform monitoring and action planning, and also provide the basis for annual overview reports to central committees considering academic standards, student performance, retention and discontinuation. Module Assessment Boards review mark distributions and performance indicators when considering results, while individual profiles are available to award boards. Further developments are planned for Unit-e, including improved monitoring of student progress, mitigation, appeals and a full disability database.

31   Recruitment, assessment, progression and completion data are regularly considered at all levels within faculties - for example, at programme and field annual reviews, at PFR and at faculty boards - and at institutional level by AQSC and the Academic Board. The audit team saw instances where management information informed policy at programme, field, school, faculty and university levels and concluded that it made an effective contribution to the management of academic standards.

32   The audit found that there can be confidence in the soundness of the University's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

33   The academic committee structure of the University provides for careful attention to the quality of its provision within the context of external reference points such as the *Code of practice*, subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ. Reference to the *Code of practice* in determining policy and practice is the responsibility of the Academic Quality and Standards Office (AQSO) and Academic Quality and Standards Committee, and where appropriate the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, all of which can make recommendations to the Academic Board. There was evidence that the University ensures that staff are involved in discussion, for instance through the relevant network groups, and that committees of schools make appropriate changes in line with revisions to the Academic Infrastructure. The Academic Infrastructure and its reference points are considered during the process of curriculum design and approval, and at field review events. The University engages with a wide range of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, which provide important external benchmarks for a number of discipline areas. This engagement is effective in ensuring that relevant professional standards, curricula and requirements inform and enhance programmes of study. Overall, the audit team was satisfied that the University made systematic use of the Academic Infrastructure in its management of learning opportunities

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

34   The procedures for the approval, monitoring and review of programmes (see Section 2) are clearly and fully communicated to all parties. All new programmes must be formally validated before students can be enrolled. To gain approval for any new programme, including collaborative provision, requires an academic rationale and a business case to be made by the faculty. Consideration of staffing and learning resources is an important part of the approval process for new courses, and criteria for approval used by the validation panel include the appropriateness of resources provision and the suitability of the staff, as demonstrated by their qualifications, relevant experience, scholarship and research. The Annual Field Review includes consideration of the student learning experience and student feedback. In general, the quality assurance procedures of the University involve student representatives in all major review activities, and in this way the views of students on their learning experience are taken into account in a systematic manner.

Management information - feedback from students

35   The University regularly seeks the views of students about their experiences on academic programmes and the support they receive. The main mechanisms for seeking student opinion are through the Students' Union student representation on programme committees and other deliberative bodies; though online module questionnaires; through university-wide surveys; and through student engagement at Annual and Periodic Field Reviews. The National Student Survey (NSS) also provides valuable information about the student experience. Student views are widely considered and reported at programme, school, faculty and central levels. The procedure for seeking the views of students in collaborative partnerships is addressed below (see paragraph 86).

36   Module evaluation is undertaken by a centralised process, delivered online. At the time of the audit this method of evaluation had only been in use across the University for one full semester: the Briefing Paper stated that 'student engagement is in process'. However, the audit team heard that at this stage student participation had been variable. The next planned phase of the online evaluation was to ensure that feedback was posted on individual modules via an online resource so that students can see the results of the previous evaluation of their current module.

37   The University uses the NSS as a major indicator within its monitoring processes; its consideration results in regular reports, action plans and, where necessary, interventions that include detailed conversations with student groups. The NSS is supplemented by the University's own internal satisfaction surveys. Survey results are considered by senior management, at institutional deliberative committees and in faculties. Although each faculty take a slightly different approach to the development and monitoring of the surveys, the audit team found that there was an ongoing dialogue and generally effective consideration within each of the faculties. The team did, however, find some evidence that, following due consideration of survey outcomes, consequent decisions on the side of the University were not always communicated sufficiently clearly to members of the student body. The team judged that it would be desirable for the University to ensure that it responds to students in a more timely, informative and coherent manner on the actions arising from student feedback and consultation.

38   The University participates in the International Student Barometer Survey each year, to evaluate the experience of international students as benchmarked against the sector. Feedback shows satisfaction with academic provision but has led the University to re-evaluate the clarity of information given to students by overseas agents prior to students' arrival at the University, relating to their specific programme commitments and to working in the UK.

39   The Briefing Paper stated that, on the basis of the University's internal evaluations, overall levels of student satisfaction had remained more or less constant over the last two academic years. One significant matter identified for action from the various surveys was the provision of feedback to students on their assessed work. The University had reviewed this area and introduced new procedures aimed at improving the timeliness and quality of feedback to students. The audit team heard from students and staff that the new feedback process was working well and that when student submissions were, exceptionally, returned outside the newly implemented 15-day timescale clear advance warnings and an accompanying rationale are given to students. There had been positive feedback from the student body regarding this development, which had led to improvements in the overall satisfaction rate on assessment feedback on the majority of programmes.

Role of students in quality assurance

40   The audit team found evidence of effective student participation in quality management processes through student representation on University committees and boards. Students are involved in the higher-level institutional policy and decision-making processes through the membership of the Students' Union President on the Governing Body, the Academic Board and its subcommittees. There is representation and full student engagement with the quality assurance processes through student membership on all relevant committees from institutional to programme level. Minutes of these committees indicated a good balance of staff and student members, with students making a full contribution in meetings. The team identified examples of the University responding to student feedback and of the students playing a full part in working groups. Students met by the team were supportive of these forms of representation and viewed them as effective.

They felt that the University was receptive to their views and acted on the issues raised wherever practicable. The team's meetings with both staff and students provided evidence of very good informal channels of communication between these groups.

41   Students are also routinely part of the annual review and monitoring process in a number of ways. Firstly, students are members of periodic review panels and are given training and support by both the Students' Union and the AQSO. The student voice contributes directly to Annual Field Reviews, where feedback from students is considered as part of the overall process. The University planned that the annual student representative reports from each field will be monitored in the context of both periodic and Annual Field Review activities.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

42   The University sees staff research and scholarly activity as essential contributors to the student learning experience. The University hosts activities that aim to link research and teaching, as well as pedagogical research. These activities include the annual learning and teaching conference, the Institute for Teaching, Innovation and Learning (INSTIL) Colloquium and Annual Lecture, which involves invited external speakers addressing strategically important issues such as retention of students, quality and funding, and higher education management. The Scholars' Monday Seminars attract a network of colleagues engaged in research, and offer a platform for staff to share experiences, provide peer feedback on current research activities and practise conference presentations.
The Research, Knowledge Transfer and Employer Engagement Strategy has enabled the University to develop and strengthen its research and scholarship agenda.

43   Undergraduate and postgraduate students confirmed that the staff who taught them were research active and up to date in their scholarship; they enthusiastically supported the view, confirmed from their own experience, that the research, professional practice and consultancy experience of individual staff had fed into their teaching and contributed to students' learning. Overall, the audit team felt that the University was developing and managing the link between teaching and research, knowledge transfer and employer engagement effectively.

Other modes of study

44   The University does not deliver any programmes entirely online but makes increasing use of e-learning technologies, including its virtual learning environment.
The University in its Briefing Paper stated that a common feature of its curriculum is 'blended learning', using online information and activities to support and enhance more formal classroom-based learning. The relationship between these varied according to the nature of the programme and the mode of attendance.

45   The audit team confirmed that the University has a planned and targeted approach to extending its future use of flexible and distributed learning. Most students that the team met were positive about the use made of the University's virtual learning environment and the support available to them. The team found current arrangements to be satisfactory.

Resources for learning

46   The University's definition of learning resources includes the library and facilities such as lecture theatres, simulator wards, food preparation laboratories, IT laboratories, studio and private study and group work facilities. Since the last audit, significant

improvements had been made to the learning resources infrastructure through investment in new buildings and new technology. Other improvements included the renovation and upgrading of classroom and 'common spaces' and general refurbishment of student facilities, corridors, and the foyer areas of main buildings.

47   Particular improvements had been made in relation to the use of technology to support student learning, which include IT and media services desks in libraries; the introduction of three learning innovation rooms, multimedia suites for new teaching and learning methods; and an extensive provision of new Apple Macintosh hardware and software for arts, media and music courses. In discussion with students, the audit team found that they were generally positive about the University's approach to technology-enhanced learning and the deployment of the virtual learning environment. Students highlighted in particular the access to PowerPoint presentations, lecture notes and relevant recommended reading.

48   The University monitors user satisfaction of the Library, IT, Careers, Open Days, the Freshers' Fair, student newsletter and 'My assessment'. Student feedback in these surveys shows general satisfaction and increasing confidence in the facilities and services offered to them. The University has received positive feedback on library and IT provision in the most recent surveys. The University ensures that resource allocation is in line with academic needs. New programme approvals require a business case template to be submitted to ensure that no programme is run without the appropriate learning resources.

49   From the information provided and meetings with staff and students, the audit team found that the University's arrangements for the provision, allocation and management of learning resources are effective in maintaining the quality of the student experience.

Admissions policy

50   The University's admissions policy aims to provide opportunities for students of all ages, including those who might not traditionally have secured entry into higher education. The University aims to give parity of treatment to vocational and academic qualifications to ensure that all those with the ability to succeed have the opportunity to participate in higher education.

51   The University's Strategic Plan 2008-13 (updated October 2010) includes a commitment 'to widening participation and access by reaching out at all levels'. The University is a member of the West London Lifelong Learning Network, and through this provides clear routes from further education to higher education. Its commitment to recruit and retain a diverse range of appropriately qualified students is further articulated in the Retention Strategy and the strategic objectives of the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment document.

52   The Admissions Office makes formal offers to applicants in straightforward cases, or refers applications to the admissions tutors when more detailed scrutiny of the application is required. In cases where English is not a prospective student's native language, applicants are required to have met the minimum International English Language Testing System, which ranges from 5.5 to 6.5, or another equivalent English language qualification, before commencing the programme of study.

53   The University's current admissions policy takes account of revisions to the *Code of practice, Section 3: Students with disabilities* and the latest advice from the UK Border Agency with respect to international students. Details of the University's admissions policy are published on the University website.

Student support

54   It is a part of the University's mission that its students should have easy access to high-quality support, while accepting that the support required for students is inevitably diverse and varied. The University has developed a mixed model approach that combines central and local delivery of support. The majority of academic programmes have learning support which is embedded within the curriculum, either in the academic modules or in stand-alone academic skills support made available online. The University has a student charter that defines the level of support a student should expect. Following consultation with the academic community and the Students' Union, the University has introduced a set of student entitlements, which were launched in the academic year 2010-11. The Briefing Paper stated that student entitlements have been clearly balanced against the student charter and the regulatory framework within which the student was studying.

55   Both undergraduate and postgraduate students receive a comprehensive induction to the University and their programmes. This is supplemented by the Student Handbook, student charter, student entitlement and programme handbook. The needs of part-time students are accommodated in the University's induction processes. The range of services offered to the students are focused within the 'One-Stop Shop', including health and well-being, accommodation, advice and counselling, faith/chaplaincy, disability support, library services, media services, the International Office, careers and employment services and the Alumni Association. The 'One-Stop Shop' team provide a rapid response service offering students the opportunity to engage quickly and effectively on a wide range of queries supported by dedicated advisers. Students on all campuses have access to this service. Support is also provided by the Students' Union officers.

56   The University seeks actively to ensure that its curriculum offering remains contemporary and relevant to the industries it serves. The audit team noted instances where the curriculum had been enhanced through the development or modification of modules, so as to offer more active learning, skills development and vocational experience through realistic work environments, supervised work experience, educational visits, consultancy and projects. The use of current practitioners teaching parts of the programme and the quality of staff contacts within the relevant industries also contribute to the achievement of the University's employability strategy. The team commends the University on its initiatives in promoting employer engagement and employability across the curriculum and the consequent impact on the quality of its teaching provision. This is an area of good practice within the University.

57   Similarly, good practice was identified in the high quality of external educational opportunities offered to students. This was exemplified in the provision and management of placements in the workplace, through educational visits, and the use of external contacts with industry professionals. The University's careers and employment support provides up-to-date careers and employment information and guidance. A wide range of careers events are provided including fairs, employer presentations and other events. The University has been recognised through national awards for its achievements in its employability initiatives.

58   The procedures for dealing with student complaints and appeals are set out in the Student Handbook. The audit team was informed by students that they knew the procedures for making complaints and appeals and from where to seek information and advice.

59   Through the evidence provided by its meetings with students, the audit team found there to be a general level of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and academic support available to them. The student written submission had, however, pointed to a reduced level

of satisfaction with the personal tutor system. The University has recently reviewed and revised its arrangements for personal tutoring, focusing more strongly on first-year students. Since these arrangements were relatively new, the team was unable to establish whether the revised system was yet contributing positively to the student experience and to the improvement of retention rates within the institution, which was one of the aims of the review. However, the team noted instances of variability in the implementation of the new personal tutoring policy across the three faculties and would therefore encourage the University to ensure that the new policy is fully embedded into the practices of all parts of the University to ensure that students have appropriate support.

Staff support (including staff development)

60   The University's human resources policies and procedures are clearly communicated to staff via SharePoint. The University has a standard recruitment and selection procedure. All jobs have a clearly defined job description and personal specification. Staff are inducted centrally, via Human Resources and INSTIL, and locally via faculties, where mentors are also allocated. New staff are directed to the Human Resources SharePoint site, which has a section specifically targeted at new staff. Staff are aware of induction arrangements and their obligation to attend. The University has a staff mentoring scheme for newly appointed personnel, who confirmed to the audit team that the scheme is operational and effective. Newly appointed staff who do not hold a teaching qualification are expected to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning. The team found that this requirement is well understood and is taken into account in planning staff workloads.

61   Staff training and development needs are identified in three main ways: corporate development needs identified in the Human Resources Strategy; operational development needs identified by faculty and central services; and individual needs identified through appraisal and performance review and probationary review. There was clear evidence that the University had sought to align the provision of staff development to institutional priorities and to its change management objectives. A range of development opportunities are provided both centrally and locally in the faculty. Appraisals take place annually and consist of reviewing past performance, setting new objectives for the following year and identification of any learning and development needs. The University has recently revised its approach to peer review, broadening its scope to make it more flexible in relation to academic roles and personal development. The audit team found that there are comprehensive policies and procedures in place for the professional development of staff.

62   The audit team found that confidence could reasonably be placed in the University's present and likely future management of the quality of learning opportunities.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

63   The University has a planned approach to improving the quality of the student learning experience. This is realised through the coherence and effective implementation of the Strategic Plan and its associated strategies for Learning, Teaching and Assessment; Research and Scholarship; and Enterprise and Employer Engagement. Each of these strategies was found to be well embedded within the faculty academic plans and regularly considered within the faculty committee structures. Through examination of module reports, faculty and central committee minutes, and discussions with staff the audit team found many examples of ways in which these strategies had supported the enhancement of the curriculum offering of the University in a focused, deliberate and realistic manner. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Strategy is used at faculty level in validation and review procedures and the faculties now produce their own learning, teaching and

assessment strategies, which are mapped on to the University strategic document by referencing of objectives and discussed within faculty-level learning, teaching and assessment committees. The dovetailing of work on LTA from the Institute for Teaching, Innovation and Learning (INSTIL), the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC), the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Network and the Faculty LTACs is coherent and effective, with appropriate action planning and dissemination of ideas informing LTA within the University. The University has ensured that the objectives of the LTA Strategy are taken forward within each of the faculties though the establishment of posts for learning, teaching and assessment coordinators, jointly line-managed by their faculty and INSTIL. Their role is to support colleagues in relevant development work as well as to report back on faculty progress to the responsible University committees. The team was satisfied that this role ensures that there is effective strategic oversight of faculty implementation of enhancement strategies and initiatives.

64   The Briefing Paper stated that 'the university uses quality assurance processes to create and interrogate a large evidence base to identify areas where remedy is necessary, improvements can be made and good practice can be shared'. The audit team found many examples to demonstrate that this was happening widely across the University, specifically in the following areas: annual programme reports; field reviews and their action plans; the consideration and use of the National Student Survey and internal student surveys; the use made of external examiners and their reports in evaluating and modifying modules; and the reports of collaborative link tutors. Major enhancement initiatives developed on the basis of such quality-assurance-derived information included, for instance the new arrangements for feedback on assessment and the establishment of the 'One-Stop Shop' for Student Support Services. The team found that the University also makes good use of other management information in the formulation of programme and school reports, as well as faculty academic and business plans. This was due in part to the strengthening of the processes for obtaining management information through the new Unit-e portal (see paragraph 31).

65   A range of enhancement initiatives has accompanied the period of major change in the University (see above). These developments, some of which are outlined elsewhere in this report, have included: improved communication; improvement of the teaching and learning environment; further work on technology-enhanced learning and management information systems; vocational curriculum development and engagement with employers; student engagement; and improving feedback to students on assessment.

66   The University has published an environmental and sustainability summary statement and policy, and monitors the impact and effectiveness of this policy by means of the environmental and sustainability group. The University is working towards sustainability in a number of areas, including its sustainable food policy at the London School of Hospitality and Tourism. The audit team welcomes the University's engagement with the sustainability agenda, and would like to encourage it in its broad pursuit of sustainability, and in those specific developments which will enhance the curriculum, for example Culinary Arts engagement with social enterprise such as Cultivate London, and Training for Sustainable Employability within its hospitality programmes.

Good practice

67   The University has created a series of network meetings for the promotion and dissemination of good practice, aiming to provide a forum for productive debate on ongoing initiatives and future improvement and enhancement. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Network took part in an evaluation by INSTIL, assessing the impact of that strategy on faculty action. The audit team found that this provided good evidence of its

efficacy and would encourage the University to carry out similar work with its other networks to ensure that good practice can be usefully documented and disseminated.

68   The University referred to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment conference, LTAC and the Staff Awards as other mechanisms for the dissemination of good practice. The audit team found these to be sufficient mechanisms but nevertheless believed that still more could be done to ensure that all staff have the opportunity to learn about their colleagues' achievements, perhaps through the medium of the recently resurrected staff newsletter.

Staff development and reward

69   The audit team found that INSTIL acted as an effective driver of quality enhancement within the University through the close alignment of its activities with the University Strategic Plan and subsequent strategies. Although a relatively new unit, it was clear that the INSTIL team had already contributed to the achievement of some of the University's main objectives through delivering staff development activities to staff within faculties.

70   Overall, the audit team found that the University addresses the enhancement and improvement of its programme offering to students through the clear identification of developmental priorities, through planned processes, and with a systematic communications network.

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

71   The University considers that its collaborative arrangements are relatively small. Updated student numbers provided for the audit team indicated 1,032 undergraduate students for 2010-11 spread over 21 partnerships, of which five are overseas. The partners mainly comprise further education colleges teaching franchised programmes of the University; in addition to these there are three articulation agreements with overseas partner colleges. The University does not envisage any significant expansion in its collaborative arrangements. Its strategy will be to focus any collaborative developments on building partnerships with colleges and employers on a regional and national basis and on developing selected partnerships with private educational and training companies, especially where there are synergies with its existing programmes. A list of currently active partners is publicly available on the University's website.

72   The framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities under collaborative arrangements is essentially the same as that for other programmes offered on campus at the University and described earlier in Sections 2 and 3 of this annex. Collaborative partnerships are managed by faculties and their Schools. The Collaborative Partnerships Steering Group (CPSG) monitors practice across the University on behalf of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC). The University's Collaborative Handbook provides the detailed protocols for the approval, monitoring and review of collaborative arrangements. It is regularly reviewed and updated and provides a comprehensive guide for those engaged with collaborative arrangements.

73   In preparation for the formal establishment of any collaborative arrangement, the University carries out due diligence in respect of its potential partner. Before any new partnership can be formally approved the sponsoring faculty must produce a business case to the Vice-Chancellor's Executive. Only if permission to proceed is given do further negotiations take place, which, if successful, culminate in validation. The University has separate procedures for the approval of partners and programmes and the precise nature of

the approval will be dependent on the risk associated with the collaborative arrangement. The Academic Quality and Standards Office (AQSO) will advise the faculty whether an approval event will be needed or whether a formal report on the suitability of physical and staff resources will suffice. The outcome of the findings of the validation activity is reported to CPSG for approval. Similar thorough arrangements are in place for the approval of an articulation agreement, including the initial mapping of learning outcomes and levels of assessment to the named University award. In the case of an articulation agreement, final approval is made by the relevant Faculty Academic Quality and Standards Committee (FAQSC). The audit team read documentation in respect of an articulation agreement which showed that the process had been followed.

74   The annual monitoring and periodic review of collaborative arrangements is based on mainstream University quality assurance procedures. Collaborative Link Tutors (CLTs) also produce a report which is attached as an appendix to the annual monitoring report, and this contains both an action plan and consideration of past recommendations. Articulation agreements are reviewed every two years to reconfirm the mapping of the accredited learning. Reports are received by FAQSCs and CPSG and an annual report on collaborative provision, prepared by AQSO, is presented to AQSC and Academic Board. The audit team read annual and periodic review reports pertaining to collaborative provision and general annual reports on collaborative provision presented to AQSC, and was able to confirm that the processes for the monitoring and review of collaborative arrangements were fit for purpose.

75   The approach to external examining for collaborative partnerships follows standard University procedures. Wherever possible, the same external examiner covers home and collaborative students to promote consistency across the provision. In response to the QAA audit of overseas provision's comments on its partnership with the Informatics Open Institute, Hong Kong, the University has strengthened its oversight of assessment procedures. The link tutor, along with the University programme team, provides advice and guidance in respect of assessments and marking. Though normally University staff second-mark a sample of the work of collaborative students, where the risk is perceived to be high first-marking is undertaken by the University. The audit team noted that external examiner reports confirmed satisfaction with the performance of students and the arrangements for assessment.

76   The Collaborative Handbook sets out the scope and requirements for collaborative contracts. The audit team examined two contracts and confirmed that they were fit for purpose. Both the specific contract and the procedures in the Collaborative Handbook clearly outlined the processes to be followed if an agreement was to be terminated. In recent years the University has terminated several collaborative contracts as it has sought to consolidate its provision. Termination of a collaborative partnership programme receives final approval by the Vice-Chancellor's Executive rather than through the deliberative committee structure. AQSO subsequently organises a partnership closure meeting to discuss the 'teaching through' arrangements and considers and records any lessons to be learnt from the management of the relationship. The team read documentation in respect of such a termination and which gave details of the subsequent measures put in place to ensure continuing students could complete their programme.

77   The Collaborative Handbook provides no specific guidance on how student views are to be gathered, or on student representation under collaborative arrangements. This is an omission that the University may wish to rectify as part of its regular review and updating of the handbook. However, from meetings with staff it became evident to the audit team that student surveys inform annual monitoring and periodic reports. The CLTs meet with students as part of their role and include the outcomes from this as part of their annual report. The CLTs' active involvement with both partner institutions and with their students, and the

constructive use of tutor reports to enhance the collaborative partnerships of the University, was considered to be a feature of good practice by the audit team. During the 2009-10 academic year CPSG organised a questionnaire for completion by students enrolled on collaborative programmes, but this received only a five per cent response rate. This exercise was to be repeated in 2010-11, with the questionnaires being emailed directly to students in the hope of eliciting a better response rate. The University has arranged training and workshops for CLTs and held its second annual Collaborative Conference in June 2010. The team considered that these measures introduced by the University were contributing to better communication between itself and its partners and students.

78   The University issues the certificates and transcripts for programmes at partner institutions. The audit team saw samples of these which did not consistently make reference to the location of study or partner institution on either the certificate or transcript. The team considered it advisable that the University ensure all transcripts or certificates for collaborative students made reference to the location of study and partner institution in line with the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*. Publicity and marketing materials for collaborative arrangements are checked by the CLT in consultation with the Marketing, Recruitment and Communications Department at the University

79   Overall, the audit team was able to support the University's assertion that its arrangements for the management of its collaborative provision were sound. There is an open and authoritative oversight of this provision, and the team found that the University has developed and implemented robust processes in respect of its collaborative arrangements, which have enabled it to strengthen the management of academic standards and learning opportunities of students at its collaborative partners.

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

80   The University has a modest amount of postgraduate research activity. In September 2010 there were 65 registered research students, of whom 42 were enrolled part-time. Postgraduate research (PGR) students may study for the awards of MPhil/PhD, PhD by Published Work, and Professional Doctorates. The Research, Scholarship and Enterprise Committee has delegated to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee (RDSC) authority in matters relating to the management and administration of research degrees. The University has a Graduate School, which acts as the focal point for quality assurance of postgraduate research degrees. The Head of the Graduate School chairs the RDSC. Associate Deans for Research and Enterprise chair the Faculty Research, Scholarship and Enterprise Committees and represent faculties on Research, Scholarship and Enterprise Committee and RDSC. There are comprehensive sets of University regulations and policies, three of which are of particular relevance to PGR students: the University's Research Degree Regulations, the Research Ethics Code of Practice and the University's Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students.

81   The Graduate School has a central role in providing an appropriate research environment for PGR students. It coordinates research activity for all staff and provides a range of services to support research students. Among these are the research seminar series; the annual MPhil/PhD conference, which gives students an opportunity to showcase their research to their peers and the University community of academics; and a virtual Students' Forum on the University's e-learning platform, as well as extensive library and IT facilities. Research activity at the University is concentrated within research groups/centres located in the faculties, with one university-wide research institute, the Institute for Teaching, Innovation and Learning. There is a strategic intent to align PGR activity with these research

groups. The focused nature of support for research at the University had, in the view of the audit team, contributed to the creation of a research environment conducive to successful research degree study.

82   All appropriately qualified candidates are invited for interview by the provisional supervisor and another member of staff, normally a member of RDSC. A two-stage process of initial enrolment, followed by formal registration of their research proposal within 12 months, is employed to ensure that students are adequately prepared for their study. All research students are required to register for the Postgraduate Certificate in Research, unless eligible for advanced standing, and to write a Research Proposal for scrutiny by their Faculty Research, Scholarship and Enterprise Committee and subsequently for approval by the RDSC. The Graduate School delivers a one-day induction programme for PGR students. The responsibilities and entitlements of research students are fully outlined in the Research Student Handbook. The audit team considered that the selection, admission and induction of PGR students were efficient and provided a sound basis for their future study.

83   The University's Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students sets out clear guidelines with regard to the responsibilities of supervisors and research students, providing for a minimum of four student-supervisor meetings each academic year. Research supervisors must be research active. Research students should have at least two and normally not more than three supervisors. It is expected that this supervisory team will normally have had a combined experience of supervising not fewer than two candidates to successful completion. One of the supervisory team will take the role of principal supervisor and this will normally not be for more than six students. The Graduate School runs regular training workshops for supervisors, which are mandatory for all supervisors. Research students met by the audit team confirmed the frequency and usefulness of the meetings with their supervisors. An agreed version of these meetings is then written into the supervisory record. The team considered the University's arrangements for the supervision of PGR students to be effective.

84   Research students move through a systematic monitoring of their progress towards their award. Initial enrolment and registration is followed by the need for all PGR students to write an annual progress report clearly indicating their research achievements so far and their future plans. Supervisors must provide a brief summary of the student's performance. All annual progress reports are sent to the Graduate School for data collation prior to discussion and approval by RDSC. Research students who do not submit a report or whose revised reports are deemed to be unsatisfactory by the RDSC are withdrawn from their research programmes. Transfer from MPhil to PhD also requires approval from RDSC following the submission of a satisfactory report from the PGR student accompanied by a written statement of support from the principal supervisor. From a reading of documentation and a meeting with some PGR students the audit team considered that the arrangements for progression and review of research students were working satisfactorily.

85   PGR students participate in the national postgraduate research experience survey, while in 2010 there was an additional internal University questionnaire based on this survey. The annual progress report provides some opportunity for feedback that is independent of the supervisor, as does the supervisory record, which enables the student to outline their personal development activities. Students are also represented on the University and faculty Research Committees. The audit team considered that ample opportunities were provided for PGR students to express their views at the University.

86   The key features for ensuring that appropriate development opportunities are available to students include the Postgraduate Certificate in Research, the annual MPhil/PhD conference, the Research Seminar Series and the opportunity to take a module from the Postgraduate Diploma in Research on 'Writing for research and publication' and to

attend a Vitae course on 'How to be an effective researcher'. Student feedback on their experience as PGR students at the University was generally positive but indicated a need for more professional, career and teaching support. The University has discussed these needs and introduced a mandatory workshop for all research students who teach. The audit team considered that the University had made satisfactory progress to enable students to gain appropriate research and development skills and welcomed its intention to continue this progress.

87   All aspects of the assessment arrangements for PGRs are laid out in clear and detailed regulations in the University's research degrees regulations. These are approved and updated on a regular basis by RDSC. The University has introduced an independent chair for all oral examinations in accordance with the suggestion of the 2006 QAA review of research degree programmes, but the audit team noted that this is not yet included in the regulations. The University may wish to rectify this in its next update of the document. Processes are in place to enable PGR students to raise grievances during their study period and to request a review of an examination decision. The criteria for such appeals are clearly laid out in the regulations and in the Research Student Handbook, and involve the RDSC in their resolution. The team concluded that the assessment regime for PGR students was appropriate and suitably aligned with the FHEQ.

88   The audit team read a range of documents relating to the management of postgraduate research, and the minutes of the relevant committees; it met with research students and research supervisors. The evidence considered by the team led it to conclude that the institutional framework for research students was providing an appropriate research environment. Research students' experience was positive and their assessment was rigorous and effective. Management of PGR programmes met the requirements of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

Section 7: Published information

89   The University has clear mechanisms to ensure that the information it publishes about itself is accurate and complete, and the student written submission indicated that students are satisfied with the accuracy of the information that the University provides. The prospectus and University websites are monitored centrally by Marketing, Recruitment and Communications, with individual sections updated by named individuals within each of the faculties. A Student Handbook on University services is provided for all students, with supplements prepared for postgraduate students and students studying Nursing or Midwifery. Additional programme handbooks are formally approved within faculties; individual module guides are circulated for information to all staff that teach on the module, and are also sent to the external examiner.

90   All external examiners' reports are stored on the Academic Quality and Standards Office site and made accessible to staff through the University's intranet. The audit team found many instances where external examiners' reports were shared with students through programme committees.

91   The audit team found that the University provided only limited information that was publicly available (for instance through its web pages) regarding the institutional quality framework and the way in which it works to ensure that the academic standards of awards and the quality of the student learning experience are safeguarded. The team considered that it would beneficial for the University to provide more public information regarding its internal quality assurance procedures.

92   As part of the audit process, the audit team investigated the UNISTATS website for teaching quality information, as well as the UCAS site, and found that the information provided is accurate and complete. The University's public website was also explored and was found to provide generally accurate information about the University's provision, although some of the published programme specifications needed to be updated. The process for providing information to students in collaborative partners was in line with the standard University procedures, and the audit team was satisfied that in general there were appropriate mechanisms for ensuring the accuracy of published information in collaborative partners.

93   The audit team found that, overall, reliance can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information the University publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards. As noted above, there are some areas where the team considered it to be desirable that the University strengthen further its existing public information about the management of the quality and standards of its programmes, in accordance with the Higher Education Funding Council for England publication *Review of the Quality Assurance Framework: Phase two outcomes*, October 2006 (HEFCE 06/45).