

The Arts University College Bournemouth

Institutional audit

May 2011

Annex to the report

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Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the Arts University College Bournemouth (the University College) from 9 to 13 May 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 College offers and those which it offers on behalf of the University of the Arts, London.

Outcomes of the Institutional audit

As a result of its investigations, the audit team's view of the Arts University College Bournemouth 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 and those which it offers on behalf of University of the Arts, London
- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The University College currently has a number of activities which strengthen a culture of continual improvement. These demonstrate the journey from quality assurance towards quality enhancement. The University College is developing a Learning and Teaching Strategy for 2011-16 which has the potential to establish a strategic, cross-institutional framework for enhancement.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

Although, at the time of the audit, no postgraduate research student programme was being delivered, the University College is recruiting students to register for University of the Arts, London full-time MPhil/PhD degrees from September 2011. The audit team had no reason to believe that the University College could not develop an appropriate environment to support postgraduate research students but noted that, at the time of the audit, no memorandum of agreement had been signed with the University and the University College was unlikely to be able to supply supervisory teams with the necessary experience without recruiting some external supervisors.

Published information

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

Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas of good practice:

- the revised annual course review and Causes for Concern processes which encourage cross-institutional reflection on standards and the quality of the learning opportunities (paragraph 29)
- the timely completion of the annual course review process, and the speedy response to external examiners' reports through the annual course review reports, which allow effective action planning for the following year (paragraphs 27 and 30)
- the cross-institutional approach to ensuring a shared understanding of standards as exemplified by the Verification Project (paragraphs 43 and 101).

Recommendations for action

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

Recommendations for action that the team considers advisable:

- ensure the validation, accreditation or approval status of all programmes is clearly indicated in all information for intending students (paragraph 111)
- ensure that students are not made a formal offer to a programme until the appropriate legal agreement, regulatory framework, resources and support are in place (paragraph 116).

Recommendations for action that the team considers desirable:

- in line with its Employability Strategy, ensure that all students are made aware of appropriate opportunities for workplace experience, including those provided by the Enterprise Pavilion (paragraphs 70 and 78)
- in implementing its new Learning and Teaching Strategy, give priority to further developing a strategic understanding of, and systematic approach to, quality enhancement consistently across the University College (paragraph 106).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1 The Arts University College Bournemouth is a specialist institution providing programmes in the creative arts. It has its origins in an institute providing art and design education founded in 1864. Taught degree awarding powers were conferred in 2008 and university college title in 2009, following which the University College adopted its current title. In the year 2010-11 it has 2,587 full-time equivalent students on higher education programmes, the large majority studying full-time. International students make up some eight per cent of the total. The University College has recently restructured into two faculties: the Faculty of Art and Design and the Faculty of Media and Performance. The University College offers 12 honours degrees and eight Foundation Degrees, six of which have a dedicated honours year for those who wish to continue their studies. The taught MAs have a common framework for the eight study routes. In addition, the University College has some 569 students following a range of programmes preparing them for higher education.

2 The University College has developed a set of institutional values which were summarised by the Principal in his introduction to the Annual Report of 2010: 'Academic excellence, student focus, public engagement, entrepreneurial approaches and strong records of professional practice'.

The information base for the audit

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

4 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.

In addition, the audit team had access to:

- the report of the previous Institutional audit (October 2005)
- reports produced by other relevant bodies
- the report on the mid-cycle follow up to Institutional audit
- the institution's internal documents
- the notes of audit team meetings with staff and students.

Developments since the last audit

5 Following the last audit the University College developed an action plan which was monitored by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQ). The actions were signed off by ASQ in January 2007. The audit team found that the University College had effectively addressed the six desirable recommendations (paragraph 10).

6 The seventh recommendation advised the University College to 'take timely action to ensure that the validation status of all courses is clearly indicated in all information for intending students'. Following the mid-cycle review, the University College introduced a more robust checking process for website information. There is now a two-stage process for the publication of information to the website and intranet. It also developed new arrangements whereby the Deputy Principal proofreads the final version of public documents. However, the audit team found that the PhD programme was being offered to students before a formalised agreement had been signed with the University of the Arts, London and without indicating that it was still to be formally approved (see paragraph 116). As a consequence the team made another advisable recommendation relating to this area.

7 Since the last audit, taught degree awarding powers were conferred by the Privy Council in 2008 which resulted in a carefully managed transfer of responsibility for its taught programmes from the University for the Creative Arts. In July 2009 university title was conferred and the institution changed its name to the Arts University College Bournemouth. Accordingly, from autumn 2008 all new higher education students have been enrolled onto a programme awarded by the University College and from 2010-11 all such students are on its validated awards. In order to extend its offer to research degrees from 2011-12, the University College sought a partnership with the University of the Arts, London to validate such awards (paragraphs 106-108, 114).

8 In September 2009, a new faculty structure was established and responsibilities previously held at an institutional level are being incrementally delegated to faculty level. For example, an institution-level academic plan has been replaced by faculty plans. Responsibility for learning and teaching development and for programme development and review now rests with the faculties, led by the deans. One of the main reasons for the creation of the faculty structure was the need, as seen by the University College, to integrate academic developments more closely within the academic community.

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

9 Academic Board is ultimately responsible for determining and assuring academic standards. It holds overall responsibility for the University College's undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum frameworks and regulations and the associated assessment regulations. Any changes to regulations are confirmed by the Board before their introduction. It delegates responsibility for the oversight and evaluation of the quality management and infrastructure to ASQ, which has responsibility for the overseeing validation, annual course review (ACR) and periodic review events.

10 Since the restructuring, faculty boards of study and course boards have responsibilities for academic standards through their monitoring and reporting functions. A 'light touch' process operates, minimising the burden on academic and professional staff while ensuring consideration of stakeholder needs. The University College implemented a new, two-tier examination board structure for 2009-10, with school examination boards considering the results for all students within the school and making recommendations to the central Progression and Awards Board, chaired by the Deputy Principal. The revised process introduced a chief external examiner in each faculty, selected from the course external examiners. This mechanism enables feedback on the comparability of achievement and parity of assessment processes across the institution and is part of the formal response to a recommendation from the last audit.

11 The Senior Management Team, chaired by the Principal, meets every two or three weeks and is responsible for approving new initiatives and developments. The Deputy Principal's role is to provide: academic leadership of the institutional portfolio and the promotion of research and scholarship; and operational leadership to ensure the delivery of learning, with its appropriate resources. Part of this role involves chairing ASQ. The Management Group is also chaired by the Deputy Principal and comprises the Senior Management Team and the deans. Within each faculty, there is an executive group to oversee the development and strategy of the faculty in line with institutional priorities.

12 The Deputy Principal and Director of Academic Services, on behalf of ASQ, produce annual overview reports on the operation of the higher education courses that cover the outcomes of the annual course review process and consider an extended range of evidence reflecting more broadly on the security of academic standards and the assurance and enhancement of quality. These are received by Academic Board and the Strategic Development Committee of the Board of Governors.

13 The University College is currently preparing to admit postgraduate research students for awards of the University of Arts, London and the regulations to be adopted will be those of the awarding institution (paragraphs 108-116).

14 The University College's management of academic quality is supported by a Quality Assurance Handbook, available in hard copy and through the intranet, which outlines the processes that staff need to know and use in order to assure standards and quality.

These are informed by the Academic Infrastructure and help to ensure staff at all levels operate to external reference points. There are published regulations for undergraduate programmes and taught master's awards. The Director of Academic Services, with the support of the Academic Registrar, oversees the quality management infrastructure, and operational support for the processes is provided through the Academic Standards and Quality team.

15 The University College has a comprehensive infrastructure for the assurance and maintenance of academic standards, including: arrangements for validation and periodic review; assessment regulations; external examiners; examination boards; annual review; and review of management information. These processes are seen as working together to secure academic standards and all are documented in the Quality Assurance Handbook and on the intranet. The audit team saw evidence of this infrastructure and its effective operation was confirmed by the scrutiny of documents and meetings with staff.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

16 The University College states that its quality management infrastructure has mainly been focused on assurance rather than enhancement, and is designed to provide assurance that the academic standard of awards is secure and that the quality of the student experience is maintained. It is also intended to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are considered and reflected appropriately while minimising the burden on academic and professional staff. The procedures it uses are course approval and review, external examiners, recognition by professional bodies, student perception surveys and other forms of student feedback, school and faculty examination boards and the central Progression and Awards Board. The University College offers courses made up of units which vary in size of credit.

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

17 The University College has a well-established, two-stage process for the approval of new courses. Proposals are considered first by the Senior Management Team for strategic fit and those progressed to second stage consideration have clear curriculum and course information and full marketing and resourcing material prepared, sufficient to allow the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQ) to decide whether the proposal should be progressed to validation. At this stage the proposal is also circulated to relevant managers for comment, especially concerning potential resource implications.

18 Proposals are next subjected to a faculty-level validation by a panel with external participation, which advises the dean and may impose conditions or recommendations. Following this it is forwarded to the Academic Standards and Quality team and formally considered by a validation panel established by the Chair of ASQ. These panels are normally chaired by an appropriately experienced dean of faculty, associate dean, or a principal lecturer, and include two academic members from other schools and two external members. They are required to ensure that the proposed course offers a coherent educational experience, contains appropriate learning outcomes, and is supported by relevant expertise and resources.

19 Courses are validated for a maximum period of five years and, during the final year of validation, a periodic review is undertaken by a process and panel similar to those for validation, although the panel also includes up to two student representatives. It meets students and evaluates the performance of the course against appropriate indicators

throughout the review period. The review also permits significant updating to course design and delivery and the panel usefully receives relevant course statistics including retention, progression and achievement data and the outcomes of student surveys and unit evaluations.

20 During 2010-11, ASQ proposed changes in the periodic review process in light of the increasing importance of public information at course level. The new process encourages a stronger focus on student data, student satisfaction, employability and issues such as diversity and sustainability. It is being piloted in spring 2011 and the outcomes of the new process will be presented to ASQ. The audit team saw evidence of a comprehensive discussion of the revised periodic review process by ASQ.

21 The outcomes of both validation and periodic review events result in a recommendation to ASQ for approval for a period of up to five years, or for further development work. The panel can impose conditions, require actions or impose recommendations to which the course team must respond before the next enrolment. Panels may also make recommendations to the institution through ASQ. Minor changes such as the introduction of new units or amendments to existing units are overseen by course and faculty boards and confirmed by ASQ. The process and limits on the scope of such changes are set out in the Quality Assurance Handbook.

22 Formal decisions to close courses are normally taken when their validated status lapses but may also occur when faculties conduct strategic portfolio reviews. Course withdrawal procedures are included in the Quality Assurance Handbook and the process ensures a commitment to the studies of continuing students.

23 The audit team saw evidence of the effective operation of course monitoring and review, heard from staff and students who have been involved, and can confirm the institution's claim that the process is clear and effective.

24 All courses and service areas undergo an annual review to reflect on the previous year and consider potential improvements. A review undertaken in 2006 found that the existing process was overly burdensome and essentially backward-looking. As a result, a revised annual course review (ACR) process was implemented which both continued to provide assurance about academic standards and quality and also identified weaknesses to be remedied. It retained responses to the comments of external examiners and students and made more extensive use of management data to allow a broader consideration of the operation of the course.

25 Initially the process reviews performance against data provided by the Registry and MIS teams. Each performance indicator has a 'standard answer', corresponding to expected outcomes, and indicators are presented to course teams using a 'traffic-light' system. Responses falling outside the expected range are marked red. Ten of the most important indicators of standards and quality have been identified and a negative outcome against any of these questions requires a direct response in the ACR. With other quality indicators, course teams review performance against each theme and indicate whether there are any matters of concern.

26 The ACR process also uses a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis which leads to action plans to manage any significant concerns facing the course. The University College has analysed the new process and found that it is less resource-intensive than the previous one and that its outcomes are at least equally valuable. One thematic question is included annually to allow a more detailed review of a specific area; for example in 2009-10, this looked at responding to the employability agenda.

27 Cross-readers, one from each programme and nominated by heads of school, read each ACR report to provide independent scrutiny. Where possible this is carried out across faculties. Annual training is provided for programme leaders and cross-readers to remind them of the key features of the process and ensure a common understanding of expectations. The cross-reader completes a report template to confirm whether all the evidence has been considered and the respective sections addressed appropriately; their final reports are considered by the faculty board together with the ACR report. There are sufficient cross-readers for the process to be completed early in the autumn term and for it therefore to contribute to the timely completion of the ACR process and effective action planning for the following year (see paragraph 30).

28 The dean of faculty prepares a report to ASQ on the ACR report to a standard template. This provides an overview of the academic work of the faculty and brings together issues that require consideration or action at University College level. It also identifies any trends that emerge from the course reports, comments on the management of academic standards and quality within the faculty, and allows ASQ to gain an overview of the strength of the academic offer.

29 Having introduced the revised ACR process, ASQ also developed the 'Causes for Concern' procedure to ensure that any identified areas for improvement are clearly addressed. The process is used where one or more course indicators suggest that there might be a risk to the maintenance of standards or quality, and ensures that detailed consideration is given to this particular area through a process of team reflection and peer support. Course teams give detailed consideration to any areas where performance is significantly weaker than the institutional target and, if this does not resolve the issue, a Causes for Concern panel established by ASQ will review this area and make recommendations. Responses by the course team are monitored by ASQ. The Causes for Concern process was piloted for the first time in 2010-11 and reviewed by ASQ in December 2010, when some minor adjustments were agreed. The audit team heard from staff and saw in documents that the process was regarded positively by staff. It did not prolong the ACR process and allowed issues raised through action plans that year to be addressed. The team took the view that the revised ACR and Causes for Concern processes, which encourage cross-institutional reflection on standards and the quality of the learning opportunities, formed a feature of good practice.

30 The audit team saw evidence of the operation of the ACR process as described in the briefing paper and noted that it was normally completed by October each year. The team considered that the timely completion of the ACR process, and the speedy response to external examiners' reports through the ACR reports which allow effective action planning for the following year to be a feature of good practice.

External examiners

31 At least one external examiner is appointed to each of the higher education awards, though larger and more complex awards have two examiners. The roles and responsibilities of external examiners are published in the Quality Assurance Handbook and the criteria for appointment seek the appropriate level of discipline expertise and independence. Faculties send nominations to the Deputy Principal in his role as Chair of ASQ. Taking advice from senior members of the Committee, he approves suitable nominations which are then reported to ASQ. The audit team saw evidence of this process and noted that incomplete application forms are not accepted. Annual induction days are held for all newly appointed external examiners and are well attended. Individual briefings are given to those examiners who do not attend.

32 Following the acquisition of taught degree awarding powers and restructuring into two faculties, the University College introduced a two-tier examining system in September 2009. Progression and award is confirmed by a central Progression and Awards Board which reports to Academic Board. The role of chief external examiner has been introduced in each faculty and they attend both the school examination boards and the central Progression and Awards Board, confirm consistency and fairness in the application of the regulations, and liaise with the other external examiners within the faculty.

33 The external examiners' report form is designed to secure confirmation of the standards of awards and seeks comment on the comparability of standards and on the quality of learning opportunities offered to students. It also confirms that any requirements of professional bodies have been met. In addition the University College employs a 20-question cover sheet to check that there are no matters of significant concern and ensure that all the key items are addressed.

34 External examiners' reports are received by the Deputy Principal, as Chair of ASQ, and inform annual review at course level. A collective reading of external examiner reports is undertaken by the Academic Standards and Quality team to identify any common issues. The outcome of this scrutiny is presented to ASQ which, after due discussion, may require action to be specified on the annual quality assurance action plan.

35 There is some confusion in institutional paperwork and in staff understanding around the process of an institutional response to external examiners' reports. The briefing paper indicates that the Deputy Principal writes to all external examiners at the start of the academic year to thank them and to confirm the arrangements for the following year. Subsequently the faculty registrar sends each examiner the final version of the ACR report to provide a specific response to any matters raised in the report. In practice, the Deputy Principal writes the formal letter indicated and external examiners are sent the ACR report by the faculty registrar. However, where significant issues have been raised, the Deputy Principal also writes to respond explicitly to the individual external examiner. Although the audit team found that appropriate account was taken of external examiners' reports and appropriate actions taken forward, there remain areas within the process of responding to external examiners which are not clear and consistent.

36 The audit team saw evidence and heard from staff about the operation of the external examiner process and was able to confirm that it is generally operated in a rigorous manner and contributed effectively to the maintenance of the standards of the University College's taught undergraduate and postgraduate awards.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

37 The University College claims that national reference points play a key role in the setting and maintaining of academic standards and that institutional processes make explicit reference to the Academic Infrastructure. In the case of the BA (Hons) Architecture, the requirements of the Architects Registration Board (ARB) and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) as well as the European Union professional qualifications directive are taken into account.

38 Curriculum frameworks for undergraduate and taught postgraduate provision are aligned to *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), the national credit framework and reference the Dublin Descriptors for European qualifications. The relevant subject benchmark statements are considered by validation and periodic review panels, which must confirm that the programme makes due reference to the statement.

Programme specifications make clear the aims and outcomes of each award, noting its level in the FHEQ.

39 The University College regards the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic standards and quality in higher education* (the *Code of practice*) as a significant point of reference, and ensures that policies and procedures reference it. ASQ received a summary report in 2005 detailing the institutional responses to each section of the *Code of practice*. Revised summaries are presented annually or when a revised section of the *Code of practice* is published to take account of changes to the *Code of practice* and/or to institutional processes. The audit team saw examples of institutional responses to revisions to the *Code of practice* and concluded that overall the University College takes appropriate account of the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points.

Assessment policies and regulations

40 A new curriculum framework for undergraduate courses was implemented from 2008-09 and the regulations are consistent with sector norms for creative art and design subjects. ASQ has established a review group to prepare for the next review of the framework, expected to be implemented from 2012-13, and initial papers relating to this process have been received by the Committee. The postgraduate curriculum framework was revised during 2010-11, both in order to offer greater flexibility and to allow changes necessitated by the proposed introduction of the Masters in Architecture (MArch), enabling it to be offered from 2011-12.

41 New students are issued with a regulations handbook at the start of the academic year and also receive an introduction to the regulations from the course team. This is amplified as the first assignments are introduced. Students are also able to access the regulations through the intranet. Each unit has specified learning outcomes and assessment criteria and these enable students to be clear about the expectations of them. Students met by the audit team confirmed that they received this information and clarification concerning the expectations of assessment. The practical nature of the courses requires the making and presentation of creative work for assessment and there are currently no formal examinations at any level. Guidelines on double marking are provided to confirm that appropriate standards are being applied consistently. The regulations cover all aspects of the assessment process including the Academic Dishonesty (Cheating) policy and that for mitigating circumstances.

42 To ensure further consistency of approach across all undergraduate programmes, staff use a standard grading matrix giving indicative performance in each grade band at each level for each criterion. ASQ noted that results for assessment and feedback in the National Student Survey are amongst the highest in the sector. It also recognises that the grading matrix is a complex document which may not be accessible to all students or examiners. The Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) has therefore established an Assessment Enhancement Group to look at matters relating to assessment and, specifically, to consider during 2010-11 the revision of the grading matrix within the curriculum review of 2011 and how a new unit structure and marking scheme could be implemented from 2012-13.

43 In 2007, ASQ introduced a Verification Project which reflects the expectation that cognate disciplines have outcomes that can be compared. The project also responds to concerns raised both by examination board data and by external examiners, for example where some courses showed higher than expected average marks. In the Verification Project a selected group of academic staff review key outcomes across courses, and confirm whether standards are applied consistently and appropriately. The practice has been found useful, both in providing assurance about the standard of awards and in sharing practice in

assessment across the subject disciplines. Reports are received by ASQ in September following the year under scrutiny. The audit team saw evidence of the effective operation of the cross-institutional approach to ensuring a shared understanding of standards as exemplified by the Verification Project and consider it to be an example of good practice.

44 The audit team saw evidence of the assessment regulations, curriculum framework and associated documents and heard from staff and students that their operation was effective. The team can confirm that a rigorous and effective assessment regime is maintained.

45 With the introduction of the faculty structure in 2009, ASQ reviewed the examination board process in which a board was held for each course, confirming course unit results, and making recommendations on progression and award to an extraordinary meeting of ASQ.

46 With the new faculty structure in September 2009, a revised process was introduced in which the school examination board, chaired by the head of school and including both an independent member and the relevant chief external examiner, confirms unit results for all programmes within the school, and makes recommendations for progression and award. The institution has found the new process effective; participants welcomed the opportunity to see the application of regulations across a range of programmes and found that it helped to contextualise decisions made on the individual programmes and give an overview of patterns of student achievement.

47 The Progression and Awards Board confirms final decisions on progression and award and also reviews results across the institution to ensure consistency of approach and adherence to the regulations. Both chief external examiners attend this board which is chaired by the Deputy Principal and includes the senior academic staff and representatives of Academic Board, to which it reports. This stage also provides an overview of achievement across all courses which assists subsequent analysis.

48 Examination boards receive a wide range of information about student achievement to inform their decisions. A breakdown of student achievement in the previous year is presented alongside the average mark for each unit, noting average degree outcomes at course, institutional and sector level both within the creative arts and design and the sector as a whole. This is another example of the effective use of management statistics which permits a broader understanding and review of the pattern of student achievement.

49 During the relationship with the University for the Creative Arts, a representative of that institution attended all examination boards and prepared a report on their operation for consideration at ASQ. The University College welcomed this independent view of the examination board process and chose to retain it once it awarded its own degrees by the inclusion of an internal independent member on each board. These members liaise to confirm satisfaction with the overall operation of the boards and make any recommendations for improvements to the process. The audit team saw evidence of the effective design and operation of the new examination boards in documents and can confirm that the process is rigorous and effective.

50 Overall, the audit team formed the view that the University College's arrangements for the assessment of students are robust and effective.

Management information - statistics

51 Statistical information forms an important part of the institution's review and planning cycles. Student statistics on admissions, progression, completion, achievement, graduate destinations and appeals are collated through a central student records system. Data is provided centrally and is regularly considered by the Senior Management Team, examination boards and by course teams through the ACR process. Information for this process, and for periodic review, is set out in a quality indicator data set which identifies the statistics for the programme, highlights year on year trends and provides comparisons with both the institution and the higher education sector.

52 The ACR process requires course teams to respond to the quality indicator data sets. The audit team saw evidence that student statistics were considered on a routine basis and noted that these reflections had, where relevant, fed into the action planning for subsequent years. The institution's new 'Causes for Concern' process provides an additional check by automatically highlighting any programmes with multiple discrepancies against institutional targets. Courses identified through the 'Causes for Concern' process are required to respond to any triggers in the data and these responses, actions and subsequent trends in data are monitored at institution level by ASQ and by the Senior Management Team. Examination boards review a summary of student achievement against historic averages at course, institutional and sector level and alongside profiles of students in order to facilitate a review of patterns of achievement. The audit team formed the view that this contributed positively to the ACR process.

53 Strategic use is made of statistical reporting at institutional level, closely aligned to procedures for annual planning, monitoring and review, and the audit team saw evidence that this was implemented, considered and understood consistently across the institution.

54 The audit team concluded that a judgment of 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 and those which it offers on behalf of University of the Arts, London.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

55 The framework for managing learning opportunities offered to students mirrors that for standards which has been set out in Section 2. This will not be repeated in Section 3 but reference will be made to the processes already described.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

56 In its application to the quality of learning opportunities for students, the University College has integrated external reference points into its processes. These, and in particular the Academic Infrastructure, are kept in mind at all stages of the annual monitoring and review cycle. Up-to-date information is published on the intranet, including the *Code of practice* and the institutional response to each of its sections. Where courses have accreditation from an external professional body, the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQ) demands regular evidence of adherence to that body's requirements. All annual course review (ACR) documentation takes account of the relevant external reference points as they refer to students' learning opportunities, and the audit team saw a number of examples of the important part it plays in validation, which includes a section on mapping to subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ, and in periodic review, where the

template includes a section on 'Relation to the Academic Infrastructure'. The 2009-10 summary of external examiners' reports informed ASQ that examiners reported conformity to subject benchmark statements, the FHEQ and professional bodies' requirements.

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

57 From the validation of a new course, through ACR and periodic review, the contributing panels and committees are required to consider the appropriateness and quality of the learning and teaching methods, staff and learning resources, and the coherence of the student experience. To these ends, validation panel members are provided with course handbooks and staff CVs and allowed access to workshop and studio space, library and IT facilities. The audit team saw evidence of the effective implementation of this process in the case of one validation where, having scrutinised the course context document and its appendices on learning resources, the panel required the course team to 'further develop resource planning and strategies'. The strategies they proposed were considered and accepted by the chair of the validation panel.

58 The ACR process has been set out in Section 2. The audit team consulted a number of recent 2009 and 2010 ACR papers, where the range of sources used to analyse the quality of provision was very wide. Thus one course team's reflections concluded that it needed to improve its recruitment from lower socio-economic groups, closely monitor its unit referral rates and use more formative feedback; and, while noting the poor National Student Survey (NSS) result in 2009-10 for the question on the organisation and management of the programme, the course team was able to comment the following year on 'the excellent Student Perception (Survey) SPS returns [which] suggest that this is no longer an issue'. This also typifies the following through of actions from previous reports. ACRs include the views of external examiners on the strengths of a course as revealed through the assessment process; one examiner's report, for example, praised workshops, computer numerical control and other modelling equipment; while another commented favourably on the detailed assessment notes and evaluation feedback students had received and a collaborative poster session with students from another institution, but added that students wanted more cross-college facilities and technical support. Overall, the University College has established successful and appropriate relations with external examiners which elicit useful comments on learning opportunities. Staff appreciated and built on positive comments from external examiners on the learning opportunities in a course while responding constructively to criticism. The inputs of the cross-reader from another school or faculty and the dean in his overview report to ASQ allow the addition of comments on performance against, for example, equal opportunities and widening participation data and any concerns broader than those peculiar to single courses.

59 The periodic review of courses includes consideration of quality management, with a section evaluating staff and material learning resources. Among other documentation, the audit team consulted the 2009 review of the BA Film Production and noted the contributions from employers, the Industry Liaison Group and the Screen Academy Network. The report to ASQ noted opportunities to collaborate with students on other programmes in the institution and to work alongside practitioners and industry-active staff. The staff had also actively challenged the perception of film as a male-dominated profession by seeking to improve the gender balance on the course. At meetings to discuss the student experience, second and third-year students were witnessing improvements made as a result of their feedback the previous year. A review in 2010 considered external examiners' comments that, while levels of tutorial support were high and technical support was very good, there was one module that did not add value to the student experience. This enabled the course team to reconsider that unit. The panel report to ASQ commended, among other things, the integration of input from industry to the course design, and the creation of inclusive and dynamic studio spaces.

Noting that the course provided the framework for students to organise their own bespoke work placements, the panel recommended that the course team explore further ways in which students could find a wider range of work placements and live briefs (see paragraphs 70 and 78). It believed that the new faculty structure, and addition of full-time technical demonstrator support, had created greater flexibility and additional platforms for opportunities across courses. Following another recommendation, that generic employability skills and the breadth of possible graduate destinations be more explicitly articulated, a new section on employability skills has been inserted in the handbook, and the panel chair confirmed acceptance of the staff's responses to the review. An operational analysis of the ACR process was considered by ASQ, and staff whom the audit team met expressed satisfaction with both the analysis and the process itself.

60 The audit team considered that the University College made effective use of validation and review processes to manage the quality of learning opportunities offered to students.

Management information - feedback from students

61 All taught students are invited to complete the annual Student Perception Survey (SPS) and at least one course unit is evaluated for each level of each programme, along with any unit of 45 or more credits. The ACR process begins with a consideration of such student feedback. There are defined statistical points against which themes, units and NSS or SPS questions, are measured and any showing lower than these acts as a trigger under the Causes for Concern policy, leads to a response from the course team and, if necessary, is reflected in the dean's, and then the Deputy Principal's, overview reports to ASQ and Academic Board. The audit team was able to track the reflective and effective use made of student feedback, noting among other examples of the ACR process in practice NSS criticism of a course's organisation and management one year and subsequent evidence in the next SPS that the course team had successfully addressed the problem. Students met by the audit team expressed confidence that their views were heard and acted upon.

Role of students in quality assurance

62 The audit team found evidence that students were members of, were trained for and had been attending key quality assurance committees (course boards, faculty boards, LTC, ASQ and Academic Board), working groups (Examinations Appeals Group, Assessment Enhancement Group) and panels. Students told the team that their views were taken seriously and, in the case of validation and periodic review in particular, given equal weight to those of staff and external members.

63 In April 2010, ASQ established a Student Quality Forum, chaired by the Director of Academic Services, in order to encourage student participation in a more informal setting than formal committees and to discuss such matters as the wording of the SPS. ASQ is reviewing its effectiveness in July 2011. Nevertheless, the University College is concerned to increase the amount of this and other kinds of student engagement with its management of provision. To this end, ASQ has discussed how the Students' Union might encourage course representatives to provide other students with more feedback, and the Senior Management Team has established a Student Sounding Board to provide regular opportunities for students to meet the Director of Academic Services and the President of the Students' Union throughout the year, with an open agenda and no formal record of the discussion.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

64 The University College uses a definition of research that encompasses academic scholarship, practice-led research and knowledge transfer within the context of both the institution and the wider creative industries within which its staff are active. The University College views research as a key step in its institutional development and has, as such, invested in the research agenda, including submissions to the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise.

65 The audit team learned of numerous examples of staff research informing teaching and learning opportunities, both formally in course validation and periodic review processes and informally in the delivery of courses through additional lectures.

66 Staff are supported to undertake research or professional practice and there is an assumption that the work of staff in this area will feed back into teaching through the development of staff expertise. Information on knowledge transfer is collated annually through staff performance review and steps are being taken to align the existing processes with the institution's stronger research focus.

67 Staff are able to apply for additional support, including the ability to undertake research qualifications and Research Fellowships for specific projects. The Research Fellowship applications require consideration of potential links to the student learning experience, although the documentation seen by the audit team suggested that the opportunity for meaningful reflection on the links between research and teaching at the reporting stage was often missed.

68 The audit team saw evidence that research and professional practice within the creative industries impacted positively upon students' learning experiences, and the students with whom the team met confirmed that they valued the staff interface with industry. Despite the undoubted occurrence of research-informed teaching, the links are largely informal and the team saw no consistent evidence of a strategic approach to ensuring, monitoring and evaluating the links between research and learning opportunities. The institution's development of its new Learning and Teaching Strategy and the thematic focus on research-informed teaching in the 2011 annual course review process provide a vehicle for developing the strategic focus on ensuring that the practice that already occurs within the institution is disseminated, developed and enhanced (paragraph 106).

Other modes of study

69 The University College currently has a limited portfolio of courses delivered by part-time study and one undergraduate course is offered exclusively by part-time study. All postgraduate awards are available as both full and part-time study. The University College does not offer its awards through distance or e-learning alone.

70 Work placements are facilitated through tutorial support from the course team using the network of alumni and industry contacts, both formally through the Industry Liaison Groups and informally through individual staff contacts, following documented protocols and guidelines. The University College recognises its obligation to ensure there is parity of opportunity for accessing work placements and is aware of the difficulties faced by some students. To ensure placements are secured, they are available through the businesses in the Enterprise Pavilion, or may be deferred until the summer, with appropriate assessment adjustments being made. In some cases students may apply for financial support for a work

placement to the central Access to Learning fund. The establishment of a dedicated fund is receiving further consideration.

71 Learning agreements are introduced for all undergraduate programmes at level 5 and are used for major and extended projects at level 6 to provide flexibility and enable students to develop as independent learners focusing on their own area of interest. They are aligned with the unit's aims and learning outcomes to form a negotiated learning agreement where assessment requirements are negotiated to suit the student's personal needs.

Resources for learning

72 The library is regarded as central to the student learning experience and the Head of the Library Information Services is a member of LTC, ASQ and faculty boards. The library development plan 2010-13 is responsive to comments from staff and students. Student surveys through NSS and SPS over the last two years demonstrate a consistently high level of satisfaction with the library, some 92 per cent in the SPS, and students met by the audit team confirmed this. Staff are able to comment through the annual staff survey, and the annual overview report also includes feedback from the ACR process. They report that the library is primarily student focused and noted the need for a quiet area. The library has specialist resources including e-books, e-journals and databases to support the University College's provision. It is also used as a space for group work. Students and staff have access to the Bournemouth University Library under a longstanding joint access agreement, and this is communicated to students at induction by the subject librarians although it is not included in student handbooks. There are approximately 550 computers available to students, with 40 per cent of these being open access while others support specialist software. Information technology resources include industry-standard software, and the Information Technology and Computing Service operates a help desk facility.

73 Subject librarians attend course boards, participate in validation and periodic review and liaise with course teams on initiatives. They have recently been involved with the Information Literacy Framework, a pilot study of four programmes during 2010-11 which aims to develop skills in research for first year students. There is a commitment of time for this project, allowing subject librarians to strengthen the existing collaborative partnership with course teams.

74 The University College is developing a new IT Strategy which will include one for the virtual learning environment (VLE). Currently the VLE acts as a central repository for key unit information with links to the intranet. The Learning Technologist, who administers the VLE, is a member of LTC and advises on new and alternative technologies to support learning within the digital environment such as digital feedback, and the development of separate portals for staff and students. However the VLE is not considered by staff to be appropriate for current developments such as the use of wikis, blogs and video clips and alternative platforms are being investigated.

75 The Art of Studying website is an online, pre-entry resource for students, designed to help develop study skills, provide additional information on student life and establish peer support networks. Lunchtime workshops provide additional support during the academic year. The audit team considered this had the potential to be useful to many students at an important stage. However, students met by the audit team, including overseas students, had limited awareness of the website.

76 The University College is mindful of the impact of space on learning through its cross-institute working group investigating the influence of space on learning and pedagogy. The opening of an extension of the North Building in October 2010 has provided space for

media programmes and is highly valued by students. In the latest SPS, learning spaces overall were deemed to be appropriate by 85 per cent of students. The staff and postgraduate reading room provides a quiet environment for study. Capital bids for specialist resources are now made through faculties.

77 The Museum of Design in Plastic and the Gallery are regarded by staff as major resources supporting the creative community. The Museum is a source for students' research, to give them ideas for projects and an exhibition space for student work. The Gallery, with its regular programme of exhibitions, some featuring staff work, is used within the regular learning and teaching on many courses as a means of enthusing students and stimulating creative ideas. It has received regional and national recognition.

78 The institution uses its resources to promote the employability agenda. Most programmes provide some opportunities to gain work-related experience, including live projects and access to industry professionals, and draw on the work of well-established industrial liaison groups. Students are expected to find their own work placements and are assisted in this by staff and school contacts. At times, notably for students on Foundation Degrees where a formal placement is integral in the first year, this can prove challenging and some financial support is occasionally provided. Students also have access to the Enterprise Pavilion with its resident businesses. The purpose built Enterprise Pavilion supports the growth and development of creative businesses through incubator units, with additional specialist guidance. The Enterprise Club provides workshops that give initial backing for entrepreneurs. The audit team learnt from discussions with both staff and students that this was a useful resource but many students were unaware of it. The team therefore recommends that the University College, in line with its Employability Strategy, ensures that all students are made aware of appropriate opportunities for workplace experience, including those provided by the Enterprise Pavilion.

79 The audit team found that, apart from the greater publicity needed for workplace experience and the Enterprise Pavilion, the University College effectively deploys its learning resources for the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Admissions policy

80 Academic Board has ultimate responsibility for admissions and reviews the University College's admissions policy annually. In September 2009 ASQ introduced a revised admissions policy for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. The policy is aligned with the revised section of the *Code of practice* and also takes account of the Schwartz review (2008) and the good practice guides of Supporting Professionalism in Admissions. It applies to all higher education students and is available for staff, applicants and other stakeholders on the website.

81 The Equalities Committee monitors information relating to the backgrounds of those who enrol, to ensure that any emerging trends are identified and, where necessary, can be addressed. Data considered by this committee indicates that the admissions process operates consistently and equitably.

82 All staff involved in admissions are provided with annual training to update them on any changes to the process and disseminate best practice. Students met by the audit team confirmed that most applicants are interviewed. Some overseas students submit a portfolio electronically. The interview process is reviewed annually to ensure that it remains effective in securing the most appropriate students and also provides a high quality experience of the institution for all applicants, whether successful or not. Staff confirmed that all unsuccessful candidates are provided with feedback on their application.

83 The University College has a widening participation strategy which aims to support the successful participation in higher education of members of those groups which have traditionally been under-represented in the higher education sector, the specialist sector and within the region/sub-region. To this end, it works closely with schools, businesses, the community and other educational organisations to promote progression. An annual report on widening participation is considered by the Equality and Inclusivity Committee, predecessor of the Equalities Committee, and is then presented to Academic Board. Each year ASQ receives a report on the performance of those students who were admitted with advanced standing to provide additional assurance that appropriate decisions have been made.

84 Overall, the audit team concluded that the University College manages its admissions policy strategically and fairly.

Student support

85 The Student Services Section was formed in 2007 from the former Student Advice and Learning Support teams in order to provide a more coordinated range of services. There is no overarching policy for student support, but several policies relate to different aspects of this area and align with the revised section of the *Code of practice*. There is a comprehensive portfolio of support arrangements for students: academic, welfare, pastoral, counselling and career development.

86 All new students, including taught postgraduates, receive a thorough induction and a student guide which includes the services available to support students. Students from the European Union and overseas students are invited to a dedicated orientation programme before the induction for all students and may continue to refer to the International Office for support and advice. The student experience of enrolment and induction is reviewed by ASQ through consideration of the dedicated SPS and the enrolment process is considered annually by relevant staff.

87 Extra support is available for students with specific needs. Institutional policies were realigned with sections of the *Code of practice* relating to disabled students and careers education when they were revised in 2010. The University College offers all students an initial screening service to identify their preferred learning style and to identify any specific learning difficulties. Statistics concerning the number of students with a declared disability or specific learning difficulty are monitored by Academic Board.

88 The English for Academic Purposes (EAP) tutor, who is part of the Learning Support team, works with students, including those from overseas, to draw up an individual learning plan which sets out a structured approach to developing independent academic and study skills. There is support for students for whom English is a second language. Overseas students met by the audit team valued the specific orientation period before the start of their course and the ongoing support from the EAP tutor.

89 To assist students after graduation, guidance is included as part of all academic courses. Support with employability is provided directly to students through the Careers Service, in line with the Careers Education and Guidance Policy and the Employability Strategy. The Careers Service offers a range of services, including weekly drop-in sessions, application and interview advice, and self-employment, all of which are focused on the creative arts graduate.

90 Overall the audit team found that the institution's arrangements for student support were effective.

Staff support (including staff development)

91 Policies setting out human resource procedures are determined by the Human Resources department and communicated to staff on the intranet and through induction and monitoring processes. Policies cover entitlement and expectations for induction, mentoring, probation and observation. Enactment of these policies is the responsibility of the heads of school and the deans, and participation is monitored centrally.

92 All new staff are subject to a probationary period, which includes a comprehensive induction and observation process. New staff are matched to mentors and 'buddies', who provide advice during the probationary period, and the audit team heard from staff that this process was appreciated and considered valuable.

93 After probation, teaching staff are expected to both be observed and act as observer on an annual basis and there is good uptake of this across the institution, monitored by heads of school and, at a strategic level, by the LTC. All staff participate in an annual staff performance review process, which supports individual development and, through central monitoring of the summary forms, identifies common thematic issues for strategic focus across the institution.

94 Human resource procedures take account of the range of staff employed by the institution and include provision for all categories of staff. Hourly-paid staff and visiting tutors have access to staff development activities and are encouraged to make use of these opportunities, including payment for their attendance. Participation in staff development activities is collated and reviewed centrally, in addition to monitoring at school level. The University College is part of the Higher Education Academy pilot scheme for the accreditation of in-house professional development units and intends to use this scheme to develop further its provision of institution-specific training.

95 Some support is made available for staff to undertake research qualifications and teaching qualifications at other institutions, with financial support and remission available on an application basis. Staff may also apply for remission or secondment opportunities to work on particular projects within the creative industries, particularly where this allows staff to refresh skills and develop relationships with professional practice. Through opportunities for staff to develop their research interests and to share these with other staff and postgraduate students across the disciplines, the University College is supporting and developing an increasing research culture across the institution.

96 Under the new faculty structure, the staff development budget and planning process has been devolved to faculties, though the central Human Resources team retain monitoring oversight and ensure that plans are mapped against the institution's strategic priorities. The institution is in the process of developing a new Human Resources Strategy and is currently reviewing procedures, including those for rewarding staff through both promotion and awards. Given the length of time since the review of this Strategy began, and in light of changes to the institution's academic governance structures, the audit team encourages the institution to implement its new strategy without undue delay.

97 Overall the audit team found that confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the University College's current and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

Management information - quality enhancement

98 The briefing paper states that the University College 'is committed to the systematic enhancement of quality, and of learning opportunities'. In view of recent key developments, the University College acknowledges the need to review its approach to enhancement to articulate with the draft strategic plan for 2011-16, the newly formed faculties and the revised operational structure led by the deans since spring 2010. The institution acknowledges that since the closure of its central Academic Development unit, enhancement initiatives have not always been effectively evaluated and disseminated. Enhancement is now the responsibility of the LTC, chaired by the Dean of Art and Design who also leads the working party responsible for developing the new Learning and Teaching Strategy for 2011-16.

99 The new Learning and Teaching Strategy, which at the time of the audit was in 'initial draft form', is seen as the main driver of enhancement and is intended to provide an institutional framework supporting strategic objectives and embedding outcomes from the Curriculum Review Group chaired by the Dean of Media and Performance. The new Strategy, which aims to shape the University College's future academic development and direction, has yet to be shared across the wider community. It supersedes the progress on actions arising from the former Learning Strategy.

100 The draft Strategic Plan states 'We will be at the forefront of innovative practice in learning and teaching, enhancing excellence through distinctive learning environments and inspirational delivery methods, graduating students with high levels of skills, specialist knowledge and critical understanding of professional practice'. The audit team found evidence that the objectives relating to learning and teaching within the Strategic Plan are beginning to be shared more widely, through such initiatives as the First Year Experience project, the Assessment Enhancement Group and the Learning and Teaching event scheduled for July 2011.

Good practice

101 The audit team saw evidence of a number of activities that strengthen a culture of continual improvement. In addition to those already mentioned, these include the Employability Group, the Hide Project, Causes for Concern, Verification Project, the Art of Learning, the Information Literacy Project and Peer Assisted Learning. However, among staff there is some ambiguity as to what constitutes enhancement. With some current initiatives, the tools and criteria that will be used to monitor and learn from them were not evident to the audit team. The cross-disciplinary membership of many of the committees, projects and working groups aligned with the new, overarching Learning and Teaching Strategy has the potential to inform a shared understanding of enhancement. However, the evaluative frameworks accompanying this strategy, to ensure effective monitoring, have yet to be developed.

102 The newly created faculties are to be strategic units and are currently developing their own academic plans to align with the institution's strategic objectives including those for learning and teaching. These plans acknowledge that the managed academic work planning framework scheduled for implementation by September 2012 is critical to developments in learning and teaching. The draft plan for the Faculty of Media and Performance shows a commitment to staff engagement with learning and teaching, encouraging staff to use their allocated hours for research in pedagogic practice.

103 The University College values its National Teaching Fellow (NTF) in promoting teaching excellence and developments nationally. A performance indicator in its strategic plan refers to progressing NTF nominations which will be reported annually. The audit team was advised that nominations for future National Teaching Fellows are likely to occur via the faculties rather than through the LTC.

Staff development and reward

104 Since the suspension of the Annual Excellence Award in 2008 which, through staff feedback, was perceived to lack clarity and be potentially divisive, the University College is now at the consultative stage in the development of a new Human Resources Strategy which will review standards of performance and reward for staff. The 2011 Staff Development Policy distinguishes between its remit for staff development and those of scholarship, and relies on close liaison between the Deputy Principal, deans, deputy deans and the Human Resources department, using, among other factors, outcomes of the Staff Performance Review process to identify staff activities.

105 There are several individual examples of procedures which provide enhancement and have the potential to continue to do so. The annual course review process encourages reflection through the formulation of action plans, and the audit team considers this process to demonstrate ownership of quality that supports the enhancement agenda. The Causes for Concern procedure identifies course weaknesses against institutional targets, encourages team reflection accompanied by support and, where necessary, intervention by a review panel established by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQ). The Annual Overview Report prepared by the Deputy Principal and the Director of Academic Services on behalf of ASQ provides a reflective summary with an informative analysis, identifying actions and areas for improvement each year.

106 As an institution which has relatively recently acquired degree awarding powers, the University College is developing strategic approaches to its range of activities. The new Learning and Teaching Strategy offers the opportunity to establish a deliberative approach to enhancement of the student learning experience and to make explicit the objectives and mechanisms for evaluating progress. The audit team recommends that, in implementing its new Learning and Teaching Strategy, the University College gives priority to further developing a strategic understanding of, and systematic approach to, quality enhancement consistently across the institution.

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

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

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

108 At the time of the audit visit, the University College was advertising MPhil/PhDs on its external website and stating that they were validated by the University of the Arts, London (UAL).

109 In 2008 the University College began discussions with UAL to develop a partnership whereby it could deliver UAL research degrees. A partnership approval visit took place on 15 December 2009, and on 30 June 2010 UAL's Deputy Director of Research Management and Administration emailed the University College's Director of Academic Services to say that

the UAL Academic Board had approved the partnership proposal. The audit team was provided with a copy of the unconfirmed minutes of the UAL meeting on 17 June 2010, which clarified that the approval was for full-time students only. It was also given a written statement by the Deputy Principal which included the information that 'It was at this point, on receipt of the confirmation of approval from the UAL Academic Board, that the University College removed the tag of 'subject to approval' from its public information on the offer of research degree awards.... This was consistent with the practice established through our earlier partnership with University of Creative Arts'.

110 However, there was, as yet, no signed memorandum of agreement between the two institutions. On 17 December 2010 the University College's Academic Board was informed that UAL had approved a memorandum of agreement with the University College for the delivery of research degrees, but this was contradicted by the fact that the audit team was shown a draft memorandum of agreement dated 3 May 2011 and informed by the Academic Registrar on 10 May 2011 that it had yet to go to the two institutions' Academic Boards for approval.

111 The audit team had no doubt that the University College sincerely believed it had followed a correct procedure when it had decided to remove the phrase 'subject to approval' from its external website in autumn 2010. However, the team was firmly of the opinion that this had in fact been premature, since no memorandum of agreement had been signed by either institution, and that the University College was therefore not secure in publicising the degrees without stating they were subject to approval. The team therefore advises the University College take immediate action to ensure that the validation, accreditation or approval status of all programmes is clearly indicated in all publicity and information for intending students.

112 At a meeting, the audit team heard from senior staff that the phrase 'unconditional offer' in two of the offer letters sent to applicants was meant to mean that the students were suitably qualified and had passed the interview. The programme would go ahead in September 2011 even if only one student had been recruited.

113 The audit team was supplied with a copy of the UAL Research Degrees Handbook and Regulations (9th edition, September 2010). The team noted that, under UAL Regulations, 'Within the supervisory team as a whole, there should be a combined experience of supervising at least two research degrees to successful completion. Where a student's ultimate objective is a PhD, at least one of the two completions should be a doctorate'. However, the team was informed that no member of staff had supervised two research degree students to successful completion, that the University College might have difficulty, from its own staff resources alone, in assembling suitably qualified supervisory teams. It would probably therefore be reliant on the appointment of external staff in order to meet this UAL criterion.

114 The *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* states that 'Institutions will only accept research students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research and where high quality research is occurring'. The audit team noted that, under its then title 'Arts Institute at Bournemouth', the University College had entered 9 staff (7.5 FTE) in Art and Design (Unit of Assessment 63) in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, with a resulting quality profile of 0 per cent 4*, 10 per cent 3*, 10 per cent 2*, 70 per cent 1*, 10 per cent unclassified, and that it intended to enter more staff in the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework in 2013. Several elements were in place to develop research: the current workload scheme for academic staff allowed an annual 275 hours for research and scholarship; an active Research Committee had instituted research clusters, research fellowships and a Research Forum; a Research Ethics Committee was in existence; and, in September 2010, four members of staff had

successfully completed the Research Supervisors Training Course at UAL. The team had no reason to believe that the University College would not be able to develop an environment appropriate to support postgraduate research degrees.

115 However, in the course of the audit, the audit team learned that three students had been offered places and one had accepted. In the team's view, at the time of the audit, and therefore at the same time that it was recruiting postgraduate research students, the University College was not in a position to assure prospective students that they could necessarily be allocated a suitably qualified and experienced supervisory team. In spite of a reference to it in the offer letters, there was no Research Degrees Sub-Committee in place and the audit team saw no evidence of an equivalent remit given to another committee in the interim. The University College had not yet created a research degrees handbook of its own to complement the UAL handbook and articulate the nature of the provision, procedures and regulations for which the University College would be responsible. The team concluded that this meant that the University College was not yet in a position to offer a student a place on an MPhil or PhD programme with full confidence that an appropriate learning environment would be in place in September 2011.

116 In light of these concerns, and also of the existence of an advisable recommendation in the previous audit report along similar, although more limited, lines the audit team considered it advisable that the University College ensure that students are not made a formal offer to a programme until the appropriate legal agreement, regulatory framework, resources and support are in place.

Section 7: Published information

117 Institutional oversight of published information rests with the Information Strategy Committee which meets termly to discuss progress in implementation and the ongoing development of the strategy and prioritisation of projects. The Information Strategy Committee reports to the Management Group through the Director of Academic Services, who is a member of that group.

118 The Information Strategy sets out how the University College will deliver its key objectives with regard to information. The overall responsibility for the Information Strategy rests with the Director of Academic Services as Information Controller and the Head of Library and Information Services as Information Coordinator for the University College. The Academic Services Directorate monitors the Strategy on a day to day basis and it is reviewed annually by the Information Strategy Committee. The Information Strategy Committee is responsible for ensuring that computer systems are effectively managed to ensure information confidentiality, integrity and availability. Staff met by the audit team confirmed that HEFCE conducted an audit of data in April 2009 and found no issue with any aspect of University College's data.

119 The Student Data and Records team is responsible for maintaining accurate student records from the point of enrolment, compiling data returns for relevant government agencies, and administering student results from registration with awarding bodies to the despatch of certificates.

120 The Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQ) is responsible for reviewing and maintaining the University College's regulatory handbooks and acting as Unistats editor. The Assistant Registrar, Admissions maintains the currency of the UCAS courses and the entry requirements and ensures that changes are reflected promptly. The marketing team also checks that course information is consistent whether it is printed, available via the University College website or the UCAS entry profiles. The admissions and marketing teams

work closely on these areas to ensure clarity and consistency. Students confirmed they found the information on the institution and their courses accurate.

121 The University College website is managed by Marketing and Communications. The marketing team is responsible for producing and maintaining specific sections of the website including those aimed at prospective students. The primary promotional material for University College courses is the prospectus or directory, preparation of which is coordinated through the marketing team, who work with information submitted by course leaders and other relevant staff. All information about course content and related practical information is researched and reviewed regularly to ensure currency and accuracy. Other members of staff are consulted to provide copy which will be reviewed and edited as required. The full directory is subject to proofreading by both the Principal and the Director of Academic Services to ensure accuracy.

122 Major changes are submitted and agreed by members of the Senior Management Team. The audit team heard that, following the last audit, the University College has introduced a more robust checking process for website information. There is now a two-stage process for the publication of information to the website and intranet. Information is uploaded or amended by a 'page editor', and signed off by a 'page approver' who has overall responsibility for this area of work. These are also checked by the Director of Academic Services on behalf of Senior Management Team to ensure they are accurate. Overall, these procedures have proved effective in ensuring that information is accurate. The audit team was able to confirm that the externally available information required by the HEFCE guidelines is published on the University's website, and that the teaching quality information on the Unistats website appears accurate and complete.

123 There are appropriate procedures to ensure that new students receive the information they need. Students confirmed that all new students are issued with a course handbook during induction week. Course and unit handbooks are produced to a standard template, and consistency is reviewed centrally by the ASQ team. The audit team heard that programme specifications, now a central feature of the student handbook, have been revised with the student perspective as its main focus. The intranet provides information about the programmes in digital form, including course and unit handbooks as well as links to sections of the intranet which contain electronic copies of the relevant regulations. The team heard from staff that the regulations have been revised in an attempt to make them more accessible to students.

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

RG 812a 09/11

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ISBN 978 1 84979 399 5

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786