



Birmingham City University

Institutional audit

November 2010

Annex to the report

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Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited Birmingham City University (the University) from 15 November to 19 November 2010 to carry out an Institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the learning opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards that the University offers.

Outcomes of the Institutional audit

As a result of its investigations, the audit team's view of the University 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 the University has made significant progress in its aim to embed enhancement in its institutional culture and processes.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

The audit team found the University's arrangements for maintaining academic standards and the quality of postgraduate research degree provision are sound and appropriate to its scale and aligned with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

Published information

The audit team found that reliance can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that 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 comprehensive staff development opportunities at all levels that are utilised by academic and support staff to enhance their professional knowledge and skills (paragraphs 26, 92, 112, 118-119, 122, 149, 159)
- the special monitoring of programmes which Senate considers in need of particular oversight (paragraphs 35, 122).
- the close and sustained partnership between the University and its students which enhances the learning experience (paragraphs 75, 100, 120, 149)
- the promotion of innovation in learning and teaching achieved by the Student Academic Partners Scheme (paragraphs 76, 120)
- the impact of the Redesign of the Learning Experience as a mechanism for systematic enhancement that engages staff and students (paragraphs 118-119).

Recommendations for action

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

Recommendations for action that the team considers advisable:

- ensure that definitions, roles and working practices of programme teams are consistent with the Quality Assurance Handbook (paragraphs 32, 45)
- develop a clear strategy and strengthened management processes for UK and overseas collaborative arrangements (paragraphs 28, 44, 123-126, 129-133, 134, 136, 137, 146, 169).

Recommendations for action that the team considers desirable:

- make more explicit the extent to which consistency is required and variability is permitted in the implementation of its processes and regulations by faculties (paragraphs 21, 29, 44, 45, 53)
- limit the total number of postgraduate research supervisory teams to which a member of staff may belong and monitor this at institutional level (paragraph 150)
- at institutional level, make more explicit its monitoring and consideration of postgraduate research degree completion rates against internal and external benchmarks (paragraph 154).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1 The University was established as the University of Central England in Birmingham in 1992 when Birmingham Polytechnic received university title under the terms of the Further and Higher Education Reform Act. In 2007, the institution changed its name to Birmingham City University, with the intention that this would give the University a stronger external identity.

2 The University is situated on eight campuses across the city, although, at the time of the audit, was planning to concentrate the estate onto three main campuses. There are six faculties, which are the key organisational grouping within the University. Within the faculties, academic schools offer over 300 programmes, many of which are vocational, with more than 100 awards accredited by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). In 2009-10, approximately 25,700 students were registered for the University's awards, including 7,897 part-time students, 1,440 studying through collaborative arrangements, and 198 studying towards postgraduate research degrees.

3 The University's Mission Statement was revised in 2006-07 following the appointment of the new Vice-Chancellor. The new Mission Statement sets out the University's aim 'to be a powerful force for learning, creativity, and enterprise, promoting economic, social and cultural wellbeing', and its vision to 'be recognised regionally, nationally and internationally as a university which fosters intellectual, critical and creative endeavour'. Building on this, the University's Corporate Plan identifies strategic objectives in four core areas: the educational experience; engagement with business, the professions and the community; research and innovative practice; equality and inclusion.

The information base for the audit

4 The University 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.

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, November 2005
- the report of a Major review of healthcare programmes, University of Central England and The Black Country Strategic Health Authority, June 2006
- the report of a special review of postgraduate research provision, July 2006
- the report of an overseas audit of Birmingham City University and The Hong Kong Institute, May 2007
- the institution's internal documents
- the notes of audit team meetings with staff and students.

Developments since the last audit

7 The previous QAA Institutional audit in 2005 found that broad confidence could be placed in the soundness of the University's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and the academic standards of its awards. The audit report contained one advisable recommendation: for the University to make more effective use of internal data relating to entry qualification and final achievement at institutional level to monitor academic standards. The University has taken a number of steps in response to this; for example, by revising its template for presenting statistical data, expanding its analysis of degree classification data to include factors such as gender, ethnicity, and disability, and monitoring data against internal benchmarks set by Senate. It anticipates that the progressive introduction of a new student record system will improve the extraction, presentation, and analysis of student data.

8 The audit report also listed five desirable recommendations. The first was to continue streamlining quality systems to make optimum use of available resources. The University has taken steps to address this; for example, by revising processes for programme approval and review and re-approval to concentrate resources on developing programmes that are likely to be successful and sustainable.

9 The second desirable recommendation was to consider developing an enhancement-led approach to quality management. Notable examples of this include the extensive and ongoing enhancement of the curriculum through the Redesign of the Learning Experience project (RoLEx), and the work of the Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) (see paragraph 114).

10 The audit report recommended that the University makes further use of external benchmarks for monitoring and enhancing academic standards. The University has responded by, for example, mapping regulations and procedures against the *Code of*

practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, and mapping provision against subject benchmark statements as part of the RoLEx process.

11 The final two desirable recommendations related to student representation: to improve student participation in, and monitoring of, training for student representatives; and to consider the means by which part-time and distance-learning students might contribute to student representation processes more effectively. The University has addressed these issues by establishing a Student Representatives Coordinating Group, working more closely with the Students' Union and CELT to improve training and support for student representatives, and initiating a paid faculty student representatives scheme. The University intends to continue addressing this as part of its review of student representation.

12 In 2005-06, the University engaged with QAA through the special review of research degree programmes. The review report concluded that the University's ability to secure and enhance the quality and standards of its research degree programmes was appropriate and satisfactory. It also identified two areas for further consideration. The audit team found that, while the University had made progress in the first area, it was desirable that further steps are taken to address overall supervisory load (see paragraph 150).

13 The University was also subject to a major review of healthcare programmes in 2006. The information presented to the audit team confirmed that the institution had addressed all action points, and there were no outstanding actions. In 2007, the University also underwent an audit of overseas collaborative provision in Hong Kong. The outcome of the review was a conclusion of confidence in the institution's stewardship of academic standards and oversight of quality in collaborative provision.

14 In addition to the developments resulting from engagement with QAA, the University has undergone a number of significant changes since the previous audit. These have included a change of name to Birmingham City University; the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Development); a new Mission Statement and Corporate Plan; a new Research Strategy; a revised faculty structure; a revised committee structure; extensive development of the curriculum; and a new student record system.

The institution's framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities

15 Overall responsibility for academic standards and the quality of provision rests with Senate. As Chair of Senate, the Vice-Chancellor has executive responsibility for quality and standards. However, in practice this responsibility is exercised by three pro vice-chancellors who each have oversight of two faculties, and take a strategic lead on university-wide aspects, with a particular emphasis on enhancement: the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic); the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience); the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Development). The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) is responsible for quality management in the University.

16 There are 10 University-level subcommittees that support Senate, including the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC), which is responsible for the development of strategies, policies, procedures, and regulations relating to quality assurance and enhancement and the maintenance of academic standards. Students are represented on all Senate subcommittees relating to quality and standards, with the exception of the University Research Degrees Committee (URDC) and the Collaborative Provision Committee (CPC).

17 Responsibility for quality and standards at local level rests with faculties. Each faculty is headed by an Executive Dean who is responsible for the management of academic standards and quality processes at faculty level. Executive deans are members of the University's Corporate Management Group, and ex officio members of Senate. Each executive dean is supported by a senior management team, which comprises associate deans, a Director of Faculty Administration, a Financial Controller, and heads of schools.

18 While directors of faculty administration have responsibility for administrative processes relating to the quality of provision in faculties, the Academic Registry has a broad remit for central administration, including developing and maintaining the Academic Regulations and Policies (ARP), managing and developing the University's student record system, and managing central quality processes, including those relating to research degree programmes and collaborative provision. The audit team heard that the links between faculty administration and the Academic Registry were effective.

19 Each faculty has a faculty board, which is chaired by the Executive Dean, and is responsible to Senate for the maintenance of academic standards and the operation and enhancement of quality processes at faculty level. In 2008, the University introduced a revised structure for faculty boards and their subcommittees. While faculties are permitted to conflate faculty board subcommittees, the University aims to achieve consistency between faculties by providing core terms of reference, established by Senate, for formal subcommittees of faculty board, including a direct reporting relationship with the relevant Senate subcommittee. The quality and standards of individual programmes or groups of programmes are monitored by boards of studies, which include student representatives and report to the relevant faculty board.

20 The University considers faculty boards and their subcommittees to be central to maintaining standards and assuring quality in faculties. The audit team noted that the revised committee structure was still in the process of becoming embedded at faculty level. The team saw evidence that the University was working to achieve this in a structured and controlled way.

21 The University's framework for quality assurance and enhancement is codified in the ARP. A number of supplementary documents explain how the framework should be implemented: the Quality Assurance Handbook; the Handbook for External Examiners; for UK-based collaborative arrangements, the Operations Manual for Collaborative Programmes; for research degree programmes, the Higher Degrees by Research Code of Practice, and the Handbook for Research Degree Students. The audit team found some variation between faculties in their implementation of the University's processes (see paragraph 29) and its Standard Assessment Regulations (see paragraph 53). The University explained that faculties had a degree of autonomy within recognised boundaries, but there were no established written criteria regarding the circumstances in which, or extent to which, faculties may or may not exercise discretion. While the team agreed that variation between faculties had the potential to lead to innovation, it formed the view that it would be desirable to clarify and articulate the extent to which consistency is required and variability is permitted in the implementation of the University's processes and regulations by faculties.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

22 The University assures the academic standards of its awards through its systems for managing curricula and assessment. The key components of these systems are: procedures for the initial approval, change and re-approval of programmes of study, programme specification, annual monitoring, external examining; and the accreditation of programmes by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.

23 The University's processes for approval, monitoring and re-approval of programmes of study are detailed in its Academic Regulations and Policies (ARP), which also describes the criteria under which decisions to approve a programme are made. The procedures are clear, comprehensive and documented in the institution's Quality Assurance Handbook.

Programme approval and re-approval

24 Approval of new programmes of study is the responsibility of Senate, acting on the recommendation of a panel convened to consider a proposal from a faculty and of the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee ASQEC. Prior to a proposal for approval and preparation of the necessary programme specification, the University's Internal Scrutiny Group gives initial consideration to ensure viability of the new programme and may impose conditions to be met before the programme can be offered.

25 Approval panels are chaired by a senior member of staff of another faculty from that proposing the programme and include academic staff from the proposing faculty and from other faculties. The audit team noted the very full criteria for the re-approval of programmes and comprehensive and detailed guidance for panel members.

26 The audit team also noted evidence of usefully detailed and comprehensive briefing sessions for panel chairs and secretaries during 2009-10, with appropriate references to the place of the Academic Infrastructure in validation. The team found that the tiered panel membership system of faculty representatives, University representatives and panel chairs was useful as a means of introducing inexperienced staff to this role and of systematically developing the expertise of more experienced staff, and noted that about 125 members of staff were qualified to act as University representatives on panels.

27 The audit team considered examples of the University's preparation for and conduct of the approval and re-approval events. They noted evidence of careful preparation for the approval of the M.Arch programme, including the Chair's briefing prepared by the Programme Director and a wide-ranging set of reference papers with evidence of detailed consideration of the alignment of the programme with them, of an approval process which appeared to have been well-conducted and comprehensive, and of a concise and informative panel report. The team found that preparation for the re-approval of programmes in the School of Digital Media Technology in 2010 appeared to have been conducted with comparable thoroughness, and had led to a panel report which was full and very detailed.

28 Reports from approval panels, unless the timing of meetings acts to prevent this, receive detailed scrutiny by ASQEC before submission to Senate. The audit team noted evidence of careful and appropriate consideration of approval reports by ASQEC. Procedures for approval and re-approval of programmes in collaborative partners are similar to those for provision delivered at the University: panel reports are given detailed scrutiny by

the Collaborative Provision Committee (CPC) prior to submission to Senate for approval, again unless the timing of meetings prevents such scrutiny, in which case scrutiny prior to consideration by Senate is carried out either by ASQEC or not at all. The team endorsed the view expressed by the University that initial scrutiny of approval and re-approval reports by ASQEC or CPC acts to strengthen the scrutiny process, but heard that in 2009-10 eight out of 50 reports of approval or re-approval events had progressed directly to Senate without consideration by either ASQEC or CPC. The team formed the view that the University's assurance of standards would be strengthened if the University ensured that all reports of panels were considered and approved by ASQEC and/or CPC prior to consideration by Senate.

29 The University introduced the Streamlined Re-Approval Process (STRAP) as a special arrangement for the re-approval of programmes that had undergone redesign through the Redesign of the Learning Experience project (RoLEx) process (see paragraph 118). Following an evaluation of STRAP in 2009, four pilots of a revised programme approval process in 2010-11 had been established. The audit team accepted the University's view that the specification of the STRAP process was appropriately rigorous, although the team noted evidence of variability in the thoroughness with which faculty approval panels had carried out their tasks, and concurred with the University's view that there is scope to revise approval processes to ensure they are more clearly focused on enhancing the quality of programmes.

Changes to programmes

30 The ARP detail the processes for approval of changes to programmes of study. The process provides for consultation, as appropriate to the circumstances, with external specialists, with external examiners and with students, and the audit team noted evidence of the processes being carried out as specified.

Annual monitoring

31 The University's processes for annual monitoring of taught programmes play an important part in securing standards through their requirement to include consideration of and responses to external examiners' reports and through the overview by ASQEC of the outcomes of annual monitoring. ASQEC oversight is supported by a set of annual reports containing statistical data on progression, completion and student views, and on the comments of the University's external examiners, which the audit team found to form a full overview of academic standards and the student experience.

32 The Quality Assurance Handbook assigns to programme teams the responsibility for completing the annual monitoring report, but staff at programme level and at more senior levels who met the audit team were unable to express clearly the composition, responsibilities and working practices of programme teams. The team formed the view that there is a lack of clarity within the institution as to the manner in which programme teams carry out their responsibilities.

33 In considering evidence of the monitoring process, the audit team found examples of well-prepared and detailed programme reports, accompanied by suitable reporting of the outcomes of the previous year's action plan, by useful identification of good practice at programme level, and by an appropriate action plan for the coming year. The team noted an instance of a programme report being considered by the Board of Studies at a 'special' meeting where students were not present.

34 The audit team noted an example of a Faculty Overview Report containing detailed description and some analysis of the outcomes of action plans, and commentary on progression data, data on the graduate destinations and outcomes of the National Student Survey. Although the Faculty Overview Report also contained a description of instances of good practice across the faculty, the team found this to be largely descriptive, and lacking analysis of how good practice may be spread more widely.

35 The special monitoring process (see also paragraph 122) is used by Senate to rectify serious concerns about a programme arising from annual monitoring, for example falling below Senate benchmarks, or another quality assurance process. The audit team noted evidence of Senate using this process to monitor and secure standards of programmes about which concerns had arisen.

36 The audit team noted also the Collaborative Provision Overview Report for 2008-09 and found it to be carefully prepared with a useful analysis of collaborative provision at each partner, a review of progress on the previous action plan, and an action plan for the coming year.

37 Overall, the audit team found the University's processes for annual monitoring to be sound and carefully implemented, although more advantage of opportunities to identify and spread good practice could be taken.

External examining

38 The ARP detail the roles and responsibilities of external examiners, usefully distinguishing between the roles of specialist and general examiners who have responsibilities at module level and at programme level, respectively. The audit team noted the clear distinction made between these roles as well as the distinct role also assigned to chief examiners, and formed the view that these roles are appropriate in the context of the University's provision and regulations.

39 Criteria for the appointment of external examiners are set out in the ARP. Senate delegates to faculty boards the responsibility for the approval of appointment of external examiners. Faculty boards scrutinise nominations made by programme teams, prior to confirmation of the appointment by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

40 In considering how external examiners are briefed for their role, the audit team found that the Handbook for External Examiners offers a full and suitably detailed description of the role and responsibilities of an external examiner, and noted evidence that this is supplemented by comprehensive faculty-based briefing events for recently-appointed external examiners.

41 The University believes that the use of practitioners as external examiners helps to ensure the relevance of programmes to professions and employers. The audit team heard that extensive use is made of practitioners as external examiners in some faculties, and that the briefing for new external examiners in these faculties is designed to accommodate the potential lack of familiarity on the part of such external examiners with higher education processes and norms.

42 The ARP allows for external assessors to be appointed by a faculty to participate in the assessment of students' specialist study. Although the audit team noted that the ARP places no bar on the appointment of an external assessor as an external examiner or vice versa, they heard that there have been no instances of the same individual holding both positions. However, the team formed the view that it may help in securing the standards of

the University's provision if the criteria for appointment of external assessors and external examiners were to make explicit that the same individual may not hold both roles.

43 External examiners' reports are prepared using a template provided for this purpose, which the audit team found to be sufficiently broad in its coverage to encourage external examiners to reflect on a wide variety of aspects of their roles. The Quality Assurance Handbook sets out the process for considering these reports, which are intended to be used by programme teams to inform annual monitoring. External examiners' reports are also considered by boards of studies, permitting student representatives on boards to have access to them.

44 In considering the University's responses to external examiners' reports, the audit team noted evidence that each external examiner receives a written response to his/her report, and that these are approved by an associate dean before being sent to the examiner. The team noted evidence of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) reading each report and requiring a response from the faculty to specific issues raised. In respect of collaborative provision, the team noted that the University requires the link faculty to be involved in responding to issues raised by external examiners. However, in one example provided to the team there was no evidence of this happening.

45 The audit team noted that although programme teams are formally responsible for preparing the response to reports from external examiners, it appeared instead to be carried out typically by the relevant programme leader.

46 The annual external examiner analysis prepared by Academic Registry for ASQEC comprises a useful and detailed summary of common themes raised in external examiners' reports and of issues of institutional concern arising from them. The audit team noted that ASQEC considered this report and its lack of adverse comment on standards. However, ASQEC appeared not to consider whether good practice identified by external examiners could be spread within the institution.

Academic infrastructure and other external reference points

47 The University aims to make proactive use of a range of external reference points consisting primarily of the Academic Infrastructure and the professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with which the University engages. It has established a definition of each of its awards in terms of standard and objectives consistent with standards within UK higher education generally, and maintains these standards through its use of external examiners, subject benchmark statements, engagement with appropriate PSRBs, and through active participation in national systems for quality assurance and quality assessment. The audit team heard that staff participate in a range of national activities, including external examining at other institutions, and are involved in the activities of PSRBs.

48 The audit team noted evidence that ASQEC had given consideration to the alignment of the University's awards with the revised *Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, and had satisfied itself that appropriate action was being taken in response to it.

49 Subject benchmark statements are taken into account by programme teams that map curricula against the benchmarks as they design programmes. Approval panels are expected to satisfy themselves that programme content reflects the University's definitions descriptors of the levels of its awards and reflect appropriate subject benchmark statements. The audit team noted that guidance for members of approval panels includes appropriate references to the panel's role in ensuring that account has been taken of the Academic

Infrastructure in programme design. In considering the University's use of externality in its processes for approval and re-approval of programmes, the team noted evidence of secure external participation in approval panels, and evidence that programme teams are aware of relevant external reference points in designing programmes and preparing for (re-)approval, including the Academic Infrastructure and professionally-based reference points.

50 The audit team was informed that at institutional level, the University has not explicitly considered the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* (ESG), considering its adherence to the Academic Infrastructure, which is consistent with the ESG, to be sufficient.

Assessment policies and regulations

51 The University's Standard Assessment Regulations provide a clear and comprehensive structure for the assessment of students, in respect of the University's credit framework, the modular structure of its programmes, the assessment of modules, the conduct of examining boards, progression, compensation and the conferment of awards at a variety of levels.

52 The audit team noted evidence that the University had given careful and appropriate consideration to approving changes to regulations proposed by the Standard University Assessment Regulations Group. Senate had also recognised the need to establish transitional arrangements for students continuing on their programmes and had adopted appropriate arrangements.

53 The audit team heard that the University may take account of the requirements of PSRBs in respect of assessment regulations by approving changes to the Standard Assessment Regulations applicable only to the programmes accredited by the relevant body, and formed the view that this power had been appropriately used, for instance in the change to regulations for the Faculty of Health. The team also noted that ASQEC has permitted faculties to adopt variations to the Standard Assessment Regulations for reasons not related to the requirements of PSRBs, but that there are no written criteria or guidance relating to the circumstances in which a proposal for such variations would be considered.

54 Expectations relating to the conduct of assessment are made known to staff through the Quality Assurance Handbook, programme and module specifications, all of which are available online. The audit team heard that the University takes steps to determine and monitor the assessment load on students initially at the point of approval or re-approval of the programme, and subsequently in faculty assessment scrutiny committees.

55 During 2009-10, the University established a new set of processes for the consideration of exceptional circumstances that may affect a student's performance. In its Briefing Paper, the University drew attention to the review which preceded their introduction, and to the report that was considered by the Student Complaints, Appeals and Discipline Committee following the first semester of their implementation and which confirmed that the new process had 'worked well' in that the streamlined process had enabled an increased volume of cases to be dealt with smoothly. Nevertheless, the audit team noted the anxiety expressed in the student written submission (SWS) and by students whom they met about potential adverse effects on students whose assessment had been affected by unavoidable circumstances.

56 The audit team concluded that, overall, the University's policies and regulations for the assessment of students made an effective contribution to the maintenance of academic standards.

Management information - statistics

57 The University acknowledged the limitations of the present student record system as a source of management information. The audit team noted that a new system (SITS) had been introduced and that a new post had been created for the purpose of developing statistical reports. The team heard from staff that they foresee this development as beneficial in enabling easier and more informative production of enrolment, progression and completion data.

58 The annual 'Interim report on annual monitoring progression, retention and achievement statistics' was presented to ASQEC in a new format in 2009. The audit team found it to be usefully detailed and informative, and noted that it was appropriately referred by ASQEC to faculties in order to inform annual monitoring. Examples seen by the team provided evidence of the use of data on progression, retention and completion to inform annual monitoring and to inform re-approval events.

59 In considering the production and use of data on the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE), the audit team noted a statistical report on University-wide DLHE data received in December 2009 by ASQEC and by the Student Experience Committee (SEC), the latter addressing issues relating to the process of gathering data. The report was referred by SEC for consideration by faculty SECs. The team also noted evidence of DLHE data being used to inform preparation by programme teams for re-approval events.

60 The audit found that confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present 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

61 The University regards its regulations and procedures as matching the precepts of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*). On publication of revisions to the *Code of practice*, it has undertaken matching exercises in order to identify aspects of provision that may need updating. The audit team noted a thorough matching exercise conducted following the revisions to the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*, where the extent to which each faculty met each precept was analysed, resulting in the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC) determining that the University's provision followed the precepts of this section.

62 Other than those relating to its collaborative provision (see paragraph 164), programme specifications are publicly available on the University's website, and the audit team noted evidence of their use as reference points in (re-)approval processes. Programme specifications contain detailed descriptions of learning outcomes, of curriculum content and of assessment regimes.

63 Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) accredit over 100 of the University's programmes in total. The University's protocol for the conduct of its relationships with the PSRBs (currently it works with 40 PSRBs), describes the processes for establishing a new relationship between the University and a PSRB, for managing visits made by PSRBs, and for processing their reports. The audit team noted evidence of Senate's overview of engagements with PSRBs.

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

64 Consistent with the University's commitment to employability and to practice-based learning, approval and re-approval panels are required to include at least one member with relevant experience of industry, commerce, public service or the professions. The University requires re-approval panels to meet with students of the programme concerned, so their views inform the panel's consideration of the programme. The audit team noted evidence that the views of students had been gathered at meetings with panel chairs and that they had appropriately informed the panels' discussions.

65 The University's Framework for the Approval of Flexible and Work-based Learning governs the development and approval of modules and programmes intended to meet employer needs. Such provision is approved by the Flexible Framework Committee, and the audit team noted evidence of careful and suitably detailed consideration by this Committee of proposals for new programmes.

66 The Quality Assurance Handbook includes provision for the closure of a programme during its period of approval. The process relies on approval for closure being given by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic); the audit team found that it safeguards the interests of students already enrolled on the programme.

67 During the first phase of the Redesign of the Learning Experience project (RoLEx), and in order to accommodate the substantial revisions to undergraduate programmes being carried out, the University introduced a 'streamlined approval process' (STRAP) in 2008-09 for the purpose of re-approval of programmes that had been redesigned within RoLEx. This process had included consideration by faculty approval panels, by external examiners and by University-level panels, the latter including external members. The audit team noted evidence that the views of external examiners had been obtained in a structured manner and had formed a valuable critique of redesigned curricula.

Management information - feedback from students

68 The University participates in various national student surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and the International Student Barometer (ISB). In addition, there is a well-established Student Experience Survey (SES) that gathers the views of a sample of undergraduate students during their earlier years of study. The University collates feedback from students at programme level in the boards of studies and through module evaluation. The audit team found that the University is proactive in its analysis of the results from the NSS and SES and uses effective analysis to assist action planning by faculties and central services. ASQEC has developed an action plan to disseminate good practice gained from both surveys. The University has participated in PRES since 2007, and URDC considers the PRES results in its annual report to Senate. The 2009 ISB was analysed and the results relating to the University's students discussed at the Student Experience Committee (SEC). The University has only recently participated in PTES (2009-10) and, at the time of audit, the analysis of the results of the survey was not available to the team. The response to module evaluation varies from 20 to 100 per cent, depending on the course. The team found that the University is aware of this issue and is considering a module evaluation toolkit and other options for promoting module evaluation among its students.

69 The main ways for ensuring students are made aware of the results of surveys and actions taken in response are boards of studies and the SEC. ASQEC is vigilant in ensuring that all programmes of study have a board of studies which meets regularly. The University

also recognises the need to ensure that feedback mechanisms are clearly accessible for students with various disabilities. SEC, ASQEC and the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) ensure Senate is fully aware of any issues raised by various student surveys.

70 Faculties are attempting to address the student perceived issue in regard to communication, and the team was provided with ample evidence that faculties are engaging with students through student-staff committees, forums, councils, focus groups and, in the Business School, 'living logs', which provide audio and video feedback on actions taken in response to students.

71 The audit team heard that the location of the University on eight sites is regarded as one of the causes contributing to communication difficulties, and the University is committed to reducing the number of sites as soon as it is feasible. iCity is an online portal that directs students to various websites and information; this is regarded by the University as a tool that will help to improve communication.

72 The audit team found that the University utilises surveys appropriately and is committed to ensuring feedback mechanisms for students are available and comprehensive.

Role of students in quality assurance

73 Students are represented on most of the University's committees and at all levels, with the exception of the Collaborative Provision Committee and Research Degree Committee. Input at faculty level by research students is through faculty forums. The University has recognised that there have been issues in regard to the uptake of roles as student representatives, especially at faculty level. In order to address this, various initiatives are being trialled, including the introduction of payment for faculty representatives whose performance against set criteria is monitored by the Students' Union (SU). Recently, the SU has taken over the responsibility of paying these faculty representatives and will also introduce a more robust structure of supervision and written records of activities undertaken throughout the year. SU has considered the possibility of a conflict of interest due to payment of representatives, but considers that it is clear in regard to where the boundaries lie. The Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) works with the SU in the training of student representatives. Students who met the audit team suggested that the selection of candidates to be student representatives is at times ad hoc and training has varied. The University is aware that there are issues in this area and student representation on programmes has been promoted and discussed by the SU's Representation Democracy Manager with the course directors in most faculties, and these meetings have been positive and provided useful feedback to the University. The SU has also developed Student Representatives Awards. In 2009, 19 such awards were allocated in recognition of the achievements of student representatives (across all faculties) who had made a difference to their fellow students. Although the student written submission (SWS) indicated some issues in regard to timely provision of papers for meetings, the team was assured by the students it met that representatives were fully informed and prepared in advance for meetings.

74 The audit team found that boards of studies have good student representation and that module evaluations, surveys, annual monitoring reports and external examiner reports were discussed. A review group, chaired by the SU President, was set up in 2009-10 to review student representation on boards of studies, the aim being to enhance student engagement. Following production of the SWS, which recommended a review of student representation, the University has confirmed a wider remit for the group. A Student Representatives Coordinating Group oversees the student representation process and meets regularly.

75 The President of the SU is a member of the Board of Governors. The General Manager of the SU is a member of the Corporate Management Group and the SU was involved in the development of the Student Experience Strategy. Regular meetings take place between the SU Executive and the Vice-Chancellor and other senior managers, such as the Director of Learning and Teaching. Students who met the audit team gave examples of issues raised by the SU at meetings on behalf of the student body that had been addressed. Faculty representatives now meet regularly with the appropriate associate dean. One SU officer (Membership Engagement Manager) has been seconded for 50 per cent of his time to CELT (see also paragraph 120).

76 Current and former students provide information for panels reviewing and reapproving provision and their involvement is clearly set out in the University's Quality Assurance Handbook. There is an innovative Student Academic Partnership (SAP) scheme that is highly thought of by students (see also paragraph 120).

77 The SWS provided a mixed message in regard to the student voice being heard. However, a number of students were able to cite changes made to their course as a result of student feedback covering a wide range of issues. Students who met the audit team reported that issues raised were responded to appropriately and in a timely manner.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

78 The University is committed to teaching that is informed by research, scholarship and professional practice. The Learning and Teaching Strategy and the Research Strategy support these aims. Faculty learning and teaching strategies have action plans to achieve these goals, and the audit team saw much evidence showing how staff research directly informed learning and teaching.

79 The SWS and students who met the audit team were very positive about the teaching on their courses. The practice, consultancy and research experience of academic staff provides students with current applied information relevant to the world of work.

80 The University is committed to continuing to ensure that the curriculum is research based and provides the latest developments in the disciplines offered. The senior learning and teaching fellows have recently been given a revised job description linking more closely to the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The newly proposed procedures for the design and the redesign of programmes involves faculties working at an early stage in the development with employers, service users and external academic assessors (with expertise in pedagogy in the subject being developed) and where appropriate PSRBs.

Other modes of study

81 The University has only five programmes that are delivered by distance learning. These are at master's level and most include attendance at the University. One programme, which is delivered entirely by distance learning in collaboration with a private college, has a bespoke virtual learning environment and comprehensive support for learning.

82 The University has a framework for the approval of flexible and work-based learning opportunities, approved by Senate in 2007 in order to support one of the key priorities in the Corporate Plan. Faculties' proposals for development are thoroughly scrutinised by the Flexible Framework Approval Committee and faculty staff either carry out the assessment of student work or maintain oversight of the assessment and moderation procedures for these programmes.

83 Practice-based and placement learning are integral to a number of programmes, especially in health and education. Information about what is expected of students, placement providers and faculty staff is provided and there is a generic student mentor handbook. Students who met the audit team stated that they were fully supported on placements and their attendance was monitored. Other disciplines provide students with the options of short or year-long placements. The Library and Learning Resources Team is developing services, such as an online chat enquiry service and targeted frequently asked questions, to support placement, distance or part-time students. The University provides much material, such as journals and books, electronically, allowing access away from the University.

84 The audit team found that students studying at a distance or undertaking workplace learning were appropriately supported.

Resources for learning

85 The audit team was provided with clear evidence that resources for student learning are planned for at an early stage in programme development and procedures were in place to maintain adequate resources.

86 Specialist resources required for approval of a programme are initially identified by the Internal Scrutiny Group (ISG), followed by a resource paper that is signed by the Dean and presented to the Chair of the approval panel. A discussion in regard to the availability of resources and identification of any further needs takes place at a preliminary meeting. Ongoing costs are also considered at this meeting. Bids for funding from the Vice-Chancellor's Strategic Investment Fund can be made by faculties when developing programmes in new areas. Boards of studies are responsible for the overall maintenance of the quality of the programmes, resources is a standing item on the agenda and library staff attend.

87 The NSS and SES indicate adequate library and IT facilities, but raised some issues about provision for disabled students to which the University has responded. There is a student guide to library and learning resources that provides useful information, and the library has increased electronic books and journals. Students told the audit team that the library provision across the campuses was very good. The University has developed a new electronic portal, iCity, in 2009 and this enables the University to provide staff and students with information directly relevant to them. Electronic learning resources on the virtual learning environment (VLE) directly relevant to the student can be accessed via the iCity portal. The University's VLE is firmly established in the University as a resource to support learning. CELT's Learning Technology Development Unit working with Corporate Information and Communication Technology has developed innovative material, which includes SHAREVILLE. SHAREVILLE is a virtual town where students can engage with real-life scenarios in their field of study and has been recognised by JISC as a case study in the Effective Practice in a Digital Age publication (2009). Each faculty has a Learning Technology Champion working with CELT to enhance use of learning technologies. The SWS indicated that there was a shortage of practice rooms for students at the Conservatoire, which the University is addressing.

88 The audit team found that the University ensures adequate resources for learning and has clear mechanisms in place for detecting and addressing resource needs.

Admissions policy

89 The University's current admissions policy was produced in 2009 and is comprehensive. The admission of students to programmes is currently carried out by faculties' admission staff and tutors.

90 Academic Registry has contributed to the work of the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions programme and has ensured that admissions practices at the University reflect the good practice identified. Academic Registry plays a key role in regard to admissions, producing statistics and data for faculties and University senior management as well as regular reports to Corporate Management Group and Senate. It also advises ASQEC on revisions to the admissions policy and regulations and URDC in regard to research degrees. Implementation of the Admissions Policy is the responsibility of faculties for their programmes.

91 Each programme is expected to have detailed admissions requirements that are monitored through the University's procedures for approval and review and re-approval of programmes. The role of directors of faculty administration includes responsibility for the faculty aspects of admissions procedures.

92 There is appropriate staff development available for admissions tutors and administrative staff (involved in admissions), run mainly by Academic Registry. There are briefings in regard to clearing, and there is an annual admission forum where admissions tutors and administrators are updated on new entry qualifications and any changes to University procedures. Faculty and International office staff who are involved in international recruitment receive detailed guidance before they undertake this work. The audit team found staff development to be comprehensive in regard to admissions.

93 The Admission Policy includes the University's principles of admission, which include welcoming applications from individuals with diverse backgrounds. The University has consistently exceeded the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) benchmark in relation to widening participation. The University has clear procedures for accreditation of prior learning. SEC receives an Annual Report on Equality and Diversity which presents data on recruitment and admissions, broken down by factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and disability. Students with disabilities who apply to the University are contacted by a disability adviser, providing them with specific information with regard to the available support and funding, and students are encouraged to discuss their specific needs at this early stage.

94 After reviewing its previous process, the University decided that induction should commence prior to student arrival and continue throughout the first year, supported by staff development workshops by CELT for relevant staff. Although the audit team did not find direct evidence confirming the implementation of continual induction for the first-year students, those who met the team were generally satisfied with their induction and provided a number of examples of the support they received.

95 The audit team concluded that the University has a comprehensive admissions policy and that the admission procedure was adequate, with good staff development available for those involved.

Student support

96 The Student Experience Strategy is key to the University's approach to student support and the SU has been fully involved in the strategy's development. The Strategy sets out goals approved by Senate and has action plans. A steering group has been established and coordinates four working groups set up to produce policies to implement the Strategy. The Student Agreement Working Group has produced the Student Partnership Agreement covering six key areas. Each of these areas has a statement outlining the University's expectations of students and what students can expect from the University. The agreement is available online and first-year students were provided with a hard copy in a user-friendly format. A Student Support Policy has been developed by the Student Support Group and this policy codifies the support for academic and personal development of students.

97 At University level, services for the academic and personal support of students are organised into three groupings: the Academic Skills Centre, Student Services and the International Office. The Academic Skills Centre is part of the Library and Learning Resources and provides academic support for students. There are initiatives such as the Library and Learning Resources initiative 'Get Back on Track', providing advice and support for students submitting their assignments. There is special English language support for EU and international students. The International Office supports the international students at the recruitment phase, working with Academic Registry. Student Services provide a number of professional services with regards to health and wellbeing. The University has a Personal Assistance Scheme for students with disabilities, who are encouraged to discuss their needs at an early stage of their application to the University. The SU compliments the central support through the Students' Union Advice Centre. The University has an e-mentoring scheme where first-year students receive support from students on later years of their programmes of studies; these mentors are trained by Student Services.

98 Students who met the audit team were confident that they knew who to go to if they had a problem with their course. Although the SWS drew attention to the lack of comprehensive adherence to the 20 working days turnaround time for feedback in submitted work, students at the audit visit reported that, in the main, they received feedback when they were told they would get it and feedback was detailed and useful. The Annual Monitoring Institutional Action Plan 2009-10 is monitored by ASQEC and there are actions for faculties in regard to what students can expect in terms of the service they will receive and assessment feedback. In the action plan, CELT was charged with developing a resource pack on good practice in assessment, which was in place at the time of the audit visit. The University considers QAA guidance on personal development planning (PDP). The audit team saw evidence in the audit trails that PDP is embedded in programmes at the University. All students have access to the University's central PDP courses delivered online through the VLE.

99 HESA's Employability Performance Indicators (EPI) place the University slightly below its benchmark. The University aspires to exceed this benchmark, and in order to achieve this goal the University has invested in additional staff to build up the Careers and Employability Services within Student Services. A range of career advice and support and a number of employer engagement initiatives are provided. The University has developed an Employer Engagement Strategy (2010-2015); this is an analytical document indicating that much more could be done with regard to work experience in certain areas to improve employability skills. There is also an intention for more courses to include employers in the delivery. The students the audit team met were of the opinion that their courses were giving them employability skills.

100 All the students who met the audit team were very positive with regard to their programme of study at the University and the support they received from both academic and support staff. The team found that staff at the University had a close and sustained partnership with students that enhances the learning experience.

Staff support (including staff development)

101 Staff support and non-academic staff development at the University are the remit of the Human Resources Department (HR). There are clear procedures for recruitment, selection, appointment and induction of new staff as well as guidance on the employment of visiting lecturers. Training is provided for those operating the HR procedures. Staff who met the audit team confirmed that induction is comprehensive, with good support during probation.

102 The staff development offered by HR is delivered in-house and is comprehensive. One of the key aims of the HR strategy is to support staff to manage change and adapt to new ways of working.

103 The University has an Equal Opportunities Statement and the Vice-Chancellor is responsible for the overall implementation of the Statement. There is a Single Equality and Diversity Scheme, together with an action plan for 2009-2012 that is reviewed on an annual basis. There is an annual report on equality and diversity, and in 2009-10 the University had a week of activities on the theme of celebrating diversity and promoting wellbeing. There is also available an e-learning module on diversity in the workplace and workshops on diversity awareness. In addition, staff can undertake a 12-week certificated course in equality and diversity.

104 CELT is responsible for academic staff development and provides courses, such as the Postgraduate Certificate (Education) which is accredited by both the Higher Education Academy and the Staff and Educational Development Association. The programme is open to all academic staff, including visiting lecturers, individuals from partner institutions and NHS staff involved with teaching. New academic staff, unless they hold an equivalent qualification, must complete this course within two years of appointment and are allocated time to do so within their workload. Successful completion of the Certificate allows individuals to study for the Master's award. CELT also provides a number of workshops and one-to-one sessions for faculties.

105 The CELT website promotes a number of courses with regard to academic development of staff and these are open to staff from collaborative partners. There is a VLE practice area for staff as well as staff development that covers use of the VLE and the University's e-portfolio system.

106 Staff have had input into the newly proposed procedure for programme design and approval; the project team facilitated four consultative events (which attracted forty academic staff, with representation across faculties). The event provided staff with the opportunity to offer suggestions that were aligned with the proposals that are to be piloted.

107 The University has run a Learning and Teaching Festival for the last three years, feedback from which is considered by CELT.

108 There is evidence of innovation at the University and ensuring that this feeds into staff development. For example, an initiative by the Professor of Learning Technology Development, who is developing a drawing tool called Learning Activity Design (LAD), was considered at the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) in February 2010.

109 There is a senior learning and teaching fellow in each faculty who support staff in achieving the aims of the University Learning and Teaching Strategy; their role has recently been further developed (see also paragraphs 80 and 121).

110 The University operates the Individual Performance Review (IPR) appraisal process for all staff. There are guidelines for staff and for managers and the IPR form has a section for last year's objectives and outcomes, an agreed action plan and training needs and there is also a self review form. Although IPR is one of the cornerstones for staff development, the Briefing Paper indicated variability in compliance across the University and managers have been required to ensure comprehensive implementation of the process.

111 The other key mechanisms for identifying staff development needs at the University include annual monitoring development days and the peer observation of teaching. There is no University-level information collated with regard to peer review. Faculties are free to develop their own approach to peer observation as long as it is developmental in nature; they can use methodologies that are best suited to their disciplines. Senior learning and teaching fellows work with the heads of schools to identify staff development needs in relation to learning and teaching, including peer review of teaching. Since 2008, RoLEx work has also identified development needs at both individual and programme team levels. Staff can take long award-bearing programmes, engage in professional updating and attend conferences. The University supports staff development across the institution; support staff who do not already have a first degree are encouraged to study for a degree and support staff who have a first degree are able to apply for support to undertake master's level or professional qualifications, preferably in a subject that would be relevant or useful to their job role. The University is keen to promote research and, to this end, is encouraging staff to be research active. An annual University Research Conference has been established and a workload model introduced to facilitate the aim to commit sufficient time to research and scholarly activity.

112 There is undoubtedly a high commitment to staff development at the University and the audit team concluded that the comprehensive nature of the staff development opportunities is a feature of good practice.

113 The audit team found that confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

114 The University has undertaken a series of initiatives in response to the recommendation of the 2005 Institutional audit that it should 'consider the development of an enhancement-led approach to quality management.' Its strategic approach to, and systems supporting, enhancement are, therefore, relatively recent, and include a deliberate decision to embed enhancement in key strategic documents and quality processes rather than develop a separate strategy. The Quality Assurance Handbook describes the University's approach as one in which its processes provide a check on academic standards and quality within an environment that fosters quality enhancement, using QAA's definition of the term. The Briefing Paper stated that it is developing an 'ambitious agenda' of changes and that it 'puts a huge emphasis on the enhancement of the student experience.' This is promoted through the set of strategies supporting the Corporate Plan, the remit of Senate and faculty board subcommittees, and management initiatives such as the establishment of the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT), and the revised faculty structure.

115 The University's strategies for Learning and Teaching, Research, Student Experience, and Employer Engagement, approved since 2007, each guide key complementary aspects of its approach to enhancement. The Learning and Teaching Strategy, structured around seven key goals, is fundamental to this drive for improvement. Faculties develop their own annual learning and teaching strategy and action plan aligned with those goals and the relevant faculty strategic plan, which are periodically monitored by the University Learning and Teaching Committee. The Research Strategy's aim to embed a research culture has, as one of its main objectives, the improvement of learning and teaching for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The Student Experience Strategy identifies goals to improve the support students need as learners, while the Employer Engagement Strategy seeks to set out how the University can be transformed into a true employer-focused institution which, it accepts, is still in the early stage of strategic development. In addition, one of the key aims of the Human Resources Strategy is supporting staff through change and to adopt new ways of working.

116 The revised committee structure allocates formal responsibility for an aspect of enhancement to several Senate subcommittees. The purpose of the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC) includes to 'promote a culture of evaluation, reflection and commitment to the maintenance of academic standards', and thus it bears a key responsibility for linking assurance and enhancement by exploiting the potential of the outcomes of routine monitoring. It addresses this through scrutiny of a range of internal and external reports. Institutional overview reports encompass both home and collaborative provision and include an action plan responding to annual monitoring; analysis of external examiner reports; analysis of progression statistics; and evaluation of National Student Survey (NSS) and Student Experience Survey (SES) outcomes. ASQEC considers individual internal approval/re-approval and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) reports but does not receive synoptic overviews collating and analysing any common themes in recommendations. The audit team considered that the generation of a wider range of overview reports drawing on the outcomes of internal and external quality processes could further strengthen the University's promotion of enhancement across the institution. In its Briefing Paper, the University explained that responsibility for the promotion of innovation and dissemination of good practice is assigned to the Learning and Teaching and Student Experience Committees, which also coordinate and evaluate the effectiveness of improvements to the student learning experience. From scrutiny of committee documentation, the team found that this brief was systematically and successfully addressed, for example through the initiation of projects and pilot schemes, consideration and evaluation of their outcomes, and encouragement to implement the identified good practice. Dissemination is promoted by direct communication with faculties, through committee cross-membership (which includes key institutional and faculty academic and administrative personnel), and by a range of informal staff networks.

117 The audit team learned that Senate draws on the various reporting strands of its subcommittees to oversee the University's approach to enhancement, however the team considered that the extremely concise minuting made it difficult to assess the extent, depth or significance of such consideration. The University is reviewing the effectiveness of the revised committee structure during 2010-11 to ensure that the optimum number of bodies is in place and to address potential overlap of remits. Consideration of minuting conventions would improve the transparency and thus the usefulness of the records of its committee deliberation. In general, the team found that Senate and faculty board subcommittees demonstrate systematic promotion of enhancement of student learning experience across all provision, both taught and research.

118 At executive level, strategic direction of quality enhancement is shared between the pro vice-chancellors. Operational management and support is delivered by CELT and the Academic Registry, which work closely together. CELT was created in 2007 to support the

implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy and the final phase of the University's HEFCE-funded Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, which is now permanently embedded as the Centre for Learning Partnerships. CELT works with academic staff to develop innovative pedagogic practice and technological support for learning, and with the Students' Union to manage the Student Academic Partners scheme (SAP). It also coordinates the Redesign of the Learning Experience project (RoLEx). RoLEx was launched in 2008 to redesign the entire taught curriculum to address the goals of the revised Learning and Teaching Strategy. Faculties work with CELT to enhance the learning, teaching and assessment of their provision by focusing on particular groups of programmes or a theme, with a new topic selected each academic year. The initial phase, to redesign the undergraduate learning experience, was implemented in 2008-09, followed by taught postgraduate provision. Phase three, focused on assessment and employability, is currently under way and it is intended that further phases will follow in subsequent years. The University sees RoLEx as its primary vehicle for quality enhancement, and intends it to be an ongoing consultative process, owned by faculties, respecting local priorities, and fully engaging with students.

119 Robust and thorough arrangements, extensively and thoroughly documented, guide, monitor, and evaluate the RoLEx process at all levels, and assess its impact on the student learning experience. A report on phase one by the RoLEx Evaluation Group concluded that the University had taken a first important step towards placing student learning at the centre of its academic activities, but that further progress would be facilitated by the development of a culture that involved and empowered both staff and students. Its recommendations were incorporated into an action plan to inform phase two. It is envisaged that as RoLEx evolves, the process will become more embedded within existing University processes, such as annual monitoring. The audit team recognised the positive impact RoLEx has already had on programme design, encouraging more effective participation from students and employers, and also the way the experience is being used to revitalise the University's standard quality processes, such as programme approval, to prioritise enhancement. The team found that RoLEx has developed into a carefully planned, rigorously evaluated, sustainable mechanism for systematic enhancement, engaging staff and students at the University and its collaborative partners, and identified it as a feature of good practice.

120 The past three years have seen a sustained commitment to strengthening the partnership between the University and the student body. This has resulted in the development of an unusually close formal relationship with the Students' Union, illustrated by the inclusion of the Students' Union General Manager into membership of Corporate Management Group, the 50 per cent secondment of the Students' Union's Membership Engagement Manager to CELT, and the introduction of paid student representatives at faculty level. The Students' Union is encouraged to play an active part in University working groups and committee business. The audit team learned that the Students' Union strongly supports the partnership between the University and the student body, describing it as 'a cornerstone of the student experience', resulting in real opportunities to work together to develop a dynamic learning community, while being aware of, and guarding against, any potential conflict of interest. The team identified the close and sustained partnership between the University and its students, which enhances the learning experience, as a feature of good practice. The SAP scheme, a collaboration between CELT and the Students' Union, is one example of this relationship. It was described in the student written submission as a 'flagship partnership project,' which has received national recognition from the Higher Education Academy and the National Union of Students. It aims to encourage applications from mixed teams of staff and students, in equal partnership as co-creators, to bid for resources to develop a specific aspect of learning and teaching. The scheme has grown from over 20 funded projects in its launch year 2009-10, to over 40 in 2010-11, covering a wide variety of topics spread across all faculties. Project outcomes are evaluated and

published. As the effectiveness of SAP becomes established, it is increasingly being used to align with and inform other initiatives, for example phase three of RoLEx. The audit team found direct knowledge of the scheme to be variable among the students it met. However, its impact is clearly spreading, and those who have taken part are enthusiastic in their support and particularly aware of the benefits it has on employability. The team confirmed SAP's positive achievements in promoting innovation in learning and teaching and identified it as a feature of good practice.

121 The Academic Registry plays an important role in linking quality assurance and enhancement. It has amended standard monitoring, reporting and action planning templates to encourage self-reflection and to identify good practice, collates the outcomes and circulates these to faculties, thus allowing their routine consideration by central and faculty committees. Academic Registry staff hold regular meetings with associate deans responsible for learning and teaching, and with directors of faculty administration. Both have an important critical function in the consistent and deliberate promotion of enhancement and provide opportunities to discuss and spread good practice. In its Briefing Paper, the University stated that CELT has also established staff networks to promote enhancement. A senior learning and teaching fellow and a learning technology champion in each faculty work with the relevant associate dean to develop and implement the revised Learning and Teaching Strategy, each being seconded to CELT part-time. Both are members of the faculty learning and teaching committee and senior fellows also sit on the University Committee. The audit team considered that the potential of these networks has yet to be fully exploited, and supports the University's recent decision to strengthen strategic responsibility in revised job descriptions for the posts.

122 Good and innovative practice is also promoted by Connect, the University's staff newsletter, and through a wide range of staff development events at institutional and faculty levels, many also open to collaborative partner staff. These include the annual Learning and Teaching Festival, the Research Conference, the Vice-Chancellor's Conference, annual monitoring development days, and the planned first Student Academic Partners Conference in 2011. These form part of the University's comprehensive staff development opportunities, which the audit team identified as a feature of good practice. The team found that the University has a sustained and explicit commitment to the continuous improvement of its learning community, working in close partnership with students, strongly led by the Directorate and cascading down to faculties. The systems it has developed for the piloting and evaluation of initiatives work very well, and the team could see how that experience is being translated into innovative quality management procedures such as the special monitoring (see paragraph 35) of programmes that Senate considers in need of particular oversight, and which the team identified as a feature of good practice. The University has made significant progress in its efforts to embed enhancement in its institutional culture and processes.

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

123 Nearly six per cent of the University's students (1,440 out of 25,700) are registered on collaborative programmes. The Register of Collaborative Programmes shows arrangements with 13 UK partners (44 programmes) and six international partners (11 programmes and 15 articulation agreements). While the Corporate Plan 2007-2012 commits the institution to offering additional flexible learning methods and the development of new and existing international partnerships, the audit team noted that there is no overall written strategy document that guides institutional decision making by the Internal Scrutiny Group (ISG) or Senate when considering collaborative arrangements.

124 The audit team was told that there were no plans at the moment to increase UK collaboration beyond the current level, and senior staff also confirmed to the team that international collaboration will be limited to five or six successful partnerships, beyond which there are no current plans for expansion. Nevertheless, the team formed the view that there was a lack of clarity and direction as to where collaborative provision fits in with the mission of the University which could, for example, make it difficult to allocate strategic resources for its effective management.

125 The Collaborative Provision Committee (CPC) is the Senate subcommittee responsible for the monitoring, coordination and development of partnerships. Its terms of reference seem appropriate for its stated function and its membership gives it knowledge and experience in collaborative matters. The audit team noted that there was no student representative on CPC. The team also noted that, while there were faculty subcommittees mirroring those of Senate in the areas of research degrees, student experience, academic standards and learning and teaching, there were no equivalents at faculty level for collaborative provision. Instead, faculty academic standards and quality enhancement committees are required by their terms of reference to monitor the implementation of University strategies, policies and procedures for the quality assurance and enhancement of collaborative provision.

126 A published list of collaborative partners is kept by Academic Registry and the 2009-10 and 2010-11 versions were provided for the audit. The University has a number of different types of collaboration as defined in the Academic Regulations and Policies (ARP) document. From its meetings with staff, the team heard some confusion about the classification of collaborative arrangements.

127 For UK provision, Academic Registry provides a wide range of support from strategic advice, student administration function, liaison between faculty and partner, oversight of quality assurance procedures to arrangement of examination boards. Quality assurance arrangements for overseas partnerships are also overseen by Academic Registry guided by the International Policy.

128 Once approved by Senate, collaborative programmes are managed at faculty level. The faculty boards are responsible for the overview of academic management and there are faculty link tutors appointed to each programme by the faculty executive deans, both for UK and overseas courses. Partner institutions appoint a designated member of staff to act as a partner link tutor.

129 The University has two types of formal partnership agreements. Articulation arrangements have articulation agreements. All others have academic agreements and these are described in the ARP. The International Policy, which covers agreements with overseas partners, is much more detailed in its description of an academic agreement. The Policy to Govern Collaborative Arrangements with External Institutions Based in the UK is cross-referenced to Section I of the ARP and gives more detail, although it is not as comprehensive as that described for overseas collaborations. For example, it does not mention the scope, limit or period of validity, the need for a definition of the financial arrangements, nor does it include a requirement for an agreement on information, publicity and promotion. Nonetheless, all UK agreements have a financial appendix that lists all programmes governed by the agreement and the date of initial approval and scheduled review and re-approval. It also has a paragraph relating to the approval of publicity.

130 Articulation agreements are described in the ARP section 15 (overseas collaboration) but not mentioned in section 14 (UK collaboration). The University currently has no articulation agreements with UK partners. The University provides a standard operations manual for collaborative programmes offered in the UK, which sets out all the

working procedures for faculties to follow to ensure the successful management of the arrangement. No such document exists for overseas collaborations and they use bespoke manuals developed within the faculty concerned, with indicative headings as guidance provided by Academic Registry. Bespoke manuals for international collaborations are used to ensure that appropriate and specific arrangements are made that meet local and programme needs and any requirements laid down by the relevant government, but still meet the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*. These documents are scrutinised as part of the approval process.

Approval and re-approval of collaborative arrangements

131 There are clearly defined stages for the approval, review and re-approval of collaborative partnership arrangements. The approval, review and re-approval of collaborative programmes is separate, and mirrors that of in-house provision except for variations or additions that are clearly set out in the ARP. The sample trail of an overseas programme, which was approved during 2009-10, demonstrated a full and comprehensive process with clear documentation of due diligence, panel scrutiny of programme, partner and teaching staff, resource benchmarking and a clear written agreement that set out the responsibilities of both parties. The process ascertained how well overseas staff understood the requirements of UK higher education and its practices and procedures, and commented on the schedule of visits proposed by the host faculty, having regard to the nature of the partnership and programme. The audit team found this process to be robust and effective. The panel reports and supporting documents are then given detailed scrutiny by CPC, although the team heard that in 2009-10 not all such reports went through this committee, instead being presented direct to Senate (see paragraph 28). The team considered that the process would be strengthened if the University required the reports of all collaborative approvals and re-approvals to be scrutinised by CPC.

Monitoring and review of collaborative arrangements

132 Annual monitoring of collaborative programmes mirrors that of those programmes delivered at the University. There is a link tutor annual report, although staff who met the audit team indicated some confusion about where this document was considered. In the team's final meeting with senior staff, it was confirmed that these reports go to associate deans and the Academic Registry. The team formed the view that more effective use could be made of these reports by consideration at faculty boards and boards of studies associated with each programme. The Academic Registry's annual monitoring overview report includes collaborative provision and this informs CPC in the production of its report on annual monitoring of collaborative programmes submitted to Senate. The team viewed the 2008-09 report submitted to Senate in 2010. It covered both UK and overseas programmes. The action plans for 2008-09 and 2009-10 contained in the report included a number of items in relation to which action had been taken in 2008-09 and which had been identified as items for further action in 2009-10, namely programmes falling below Senate benchmarks, access to library resources, problems with network IDs and access to the virtual learning environment. Senior staff assured the team that these matters were being dealt with as a priority.

133 It was not clear to the audit team from documentation how interim approval of partner teaching staff who join a programme between re-approvals is conducted. Staff who met the team gave different answers on this matter. One group of staff suggested that it was carried out by Academic Registry's conduct of an annual review, while another group stated the link tutor and the Associate Dean performed this function through receipt of the CVs. There was no mention of this function in the job description of the link tutor.

Assessment and external examining of collaborative arrangements

134 Evidence seen by the audit team in annual monitoring reports confirms that appropriate use is being made of external examiners and their reports in line with the University's policies. However, the team saw one example where the procedures for the response to an external examiner's report were not followed. In this isolated incident, there was a response only from the partner link tutor and no evidence of input from the link faculty.

Role of students in collaborative arrangements

135 The evidence seen by the audit team confirmed that there was appropriate consultation with and feedback from students regarding quality assurance and enhancement issues, as well as adequate support and information provided for students. The student written submission mentioned that most students are happy with information provided.

Publicity and marketing materials

136 The Academic Registry requires sight of all publicity material before it is published by partner institutions and carries out annual sampling checks. Despite this, the audit team noted cases where inaccurate information about the University or its programmes had been published on partner websites (see paragraph 169).

137 The audit team found the University's arrangements for managing academic quality and standards in collaborative provision broadly sound. However, the absence of a guiding strategic approach, the variation in the way that some reports from approval and re-approvals are handled, together with other findings noted above, led the team to the view that, taken together, there is a need for further development of the overall approach. It is, therefore, advisable for the University to develop a clear strategy and strengthened management processes for UK and overseas collaborative arrangements.

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

138 The University offers three postgraduate research degree awards: Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), and Doctor of Business Administration (DBA). The regulatory framework for research degree programmes is set out in Section G of the Academic Regulations and Policies, which is supplemented by the Higher Degrees by Research Code of Practice, and the Handbook for Research Degree Students.

139 The University's policies and processes for managing the quality of postgraduate research programmes are overseen by the University Research Degrees Committee (URDC), which is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), and has delegated powers from Senate to award research degrees. The URDC operates on the basis of a partly-shared agenda with the recently-formed University Research Strategy and Policy Committee (URSPC), on account of the shared business and cross-committee membership.

140 Each faculty has a faculty research degrees committee (FRDC), which reports to URDC and the relevant faculty board. The University is increasingly devolving responsibilities to FRDCs to give faculties more local ownership of research student issues. Consistency between FRDCs is maintained by shared terms of reference, operational guidance notes, standard template forms, training for FRDC secretaries, and membership of Academic Registry staff.

141 In each faculty, an Associate Dean assumes responsibility for research matters and chairs the FRDC, and a Director of Research coordinates research degree programmes. In some faculties, the two roles are assumed by one member of staff. Either the Associate Dean or (where a separate post exists) the Director of Research is a member of URDC. The audit team heard that cross-committee membership and reporting lines between FRDCs and URDC were effective, but, from an examination of attendance at URDC in 2010, concluded that this would be improved if all faculties were always represented at each meeting of URDC.

The research environment

142 In 2009-10, the University had 198 research students, of whom 138 were studying part-time, 13 were studying by distance learning, and 16 were studying with a collaborating establishment.

143 The results of the 2009 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) identified that the University's satisfaction rates regarding research infrastructure were lower than those of comparable institutions. The University gave serious consideration to the data gathered through PRES, and, as a result, identified research infrastructure as a priority area for improvement. The audit team was informed of steps that the University had taken to address this, including further concentration of research funding within Research Centres of Excellence; the initiation of an annual research conference; provision of faculty-level research seminar programmes; and the introduction of a University-wide research skills training programme.

Selection, admission and induction of students

144 Arrangements for the admission and enrolment of postgraduate research students are outlined in the University's Higher Degrees by Research Code of Practice. All applications are considered at faculty level by two experienced members of academic staff, who review the applicant's qualifications and English language competence, and take part in the interview process. The University provides a checklist of points that faculties should consider during the admissions process.

145 Faculties must confirm that they can provide adequate support, supervision, and resources for each student before they issue an offer. For those applying to study by distance learning, the faculty must be satisfied that the applicant could access adequate facilities and supervision in their home country and attend the University for at least six weeks per year. Offer letters include a range of information, in line with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*), *Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

146 The University has a small number of research degree students studying in formal collaboration with external bodies referred to in the University's regulations as 'collaborating establishments'. Formal collaborations may include the provision of resources, including supervision, from the collaborating establishment. Applicants proposing to study in collaboration with an external body must submit a formal letter from the collaborating establishment to confirm the agreed arrangements. The example letter from an external body, provided to the audit team, gave very little detail on the arrangements. The team formed the view that, given the formal nature of the collaboration, there was a need for more detail regarding arrangements that involve external bodies, and for the respective roles and responsibilities of each supervisor to be set out in detail for the benefit of the student and the supervisory team.

147 Faculties provide induction for research degree students on an individual basis. In addition to this, induction is facilitated at institutional level through the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Practice: a University-wide, credit-bearing research skills training programme, which was introduced in 2010.

Supervision

148 All postgraduate research students have at least two, but normally not more than three, supervisors. The primary supervisor, the Director of Studies, is the first point of contact and has responsibility for meeting supervisees on a regular basis. The respective roles of each member of the supervisory team are clearly defined. Supervisory teams are normally required to have combined experience of supervising at least two research students to successful completion. For PhD students, at least one member of the supervisory team must have supervised a PhD student to successful completion. These criteria are considered as part of the registration process, and when proposing changes to supervisory teams.

149 The University offers a comprehensive training programme for new and experienced supervisors. Attendance on the training programme is considered as part of the registration process, and supervisors who have not attended the programme are strongly encouraged to attend. The students who met the audit team spoke positively about the pastoral support that their supervisors provided over and above their required duties.

150 The QAA special review of postgraduate research degree programmes recommended the University to revisit its policy on the maximum number of students that a member of staff may supervise, including second supervisions. The University has not revised its policy, which remains that a member of staff may act as Director of Studies for up to six students unless special arrangements are made. The audit team considered that a restriction on overall supervisory load would have the potential to enhance the quality of supervision for research students. Further, while FRDC and URDC review supervisory load on an individual basis, when appointing supervisors to research students, there was no evidence of formal monitoring and oversight at institutional level of overall supervisory load. Consequently, the team recommends that it would be desirable for the University to limit the total number of postgraduate research supervisory teams to which a member of staff may belong, and to monitor this formally at institutional level.

Progress and review arrangements

151 Normally six months after enrolling on a programme (or twelve months for part-time students), students submit an application to register, which, if supported by FRDC is then forwarded to URDC for approval. Students are required to register for an MPhil programme initially, except where they already have a master's degree or postgraduate-level research or professional practice experience, in which case they are permitted to register on the PhD directly. Progression times from enrolment to registration are monitored routinely. The audit team found that the average time between enrolment and registration was significantly longer than the University's target. The University anticipated that the devolution of responsibilities from URDC to FRDCs, and the introduction of the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Practice, could help to address this issue.

152 Research student progress is monitored by frequent tutorial meetings between supervisors and students. Full-time students can expect to meet their Director of Studies at least fortnightly (part-time students at least two or three times each term), and their second supervisor at least once per term. Supervisors are required to keep a record of all meetings with their research students. The progress of distance-learning students is monitored in a

variety of ways, including face-to-face meetings, email, the virtual learning environment, and Skype. The audit team noted that more detailed, specific information for distance learning students and their supervisors could further strengthen the monitoring of progress.

153 The main formal mechanism for monitoring progress is the annual review meeting between the student and the supervisory team. Prior to the meeting, the student and their supervisors each completes a progress report and action plan. After the meeting, the supervisors produce a joint report, which feeds into the faculty's annual monitoring process. The students who met the audit team commented that this process was clear, and that the action plans were useful for structuring their research.

154 Each faculty produces an annual report that provides an overview of annual monitoring and includes statistical data, such as numbers of research degree completions and withdrawals. URDC considers the faculty annual reports and produces an overview report for Senate. The URDC annual report provides an institutional overview of aspects such as the number of thesis submissions, and average progression times from enrolment/registration to submission. However, the University was unable to provide written evidence that the institution formally considers overall completion times and completion rates against external benchmarks. In light of Precept 4 of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, the audit team considered it desirable for the University to make more explicit its monitoring and consideration of postgraduate research degree completion rates against internal and external benchmarks at institutional level.

Development of research and other skills

155 The QAA special review of postgraduate research programmes had identified researcher development as an area in which the University could improve. The most significant development in this area has been the introduction of the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Practice. This programme, comprising two 30-credit modules, is compulsory for all first-year students enrolling from 2010-11 onwards. While it was too soon to evaluate the programme, the audit team formed the view that the initiative had the potential not only to support students in their development as researchers, but also to address the issue of timely progression from enrolment to registration (see paragraph 151).

156 In addition to the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Practice, research degree students are invited to attend the University's annual research conference, and a range of faculty research seminars and events. Students with teaching responsibilities, who do not have prior teaching experience, are required to attend the Staff and Educational Development Association-accredited training programme, 'Preparing Postgraduate Researchers to Teach in Higher Education'. The students whom the audit team met confirmed that they had access to a wide range of opportunities, resources, and staff expertise to help them conduct their research.

Feedback mechanisms

157 Feedback from research students is gathered in a number of ways, including supervisory meetings, student evaluations, and participation in PRES. Research students are represented on URSPC, but not URDC and FRDCs, on account of the confidential information discussed at the committees. Student input for these committees is achieved through faculty subcommittees, boards of studies, or programme boards. The audit team saw that, while there was some variation in the operation and formality of the meetings, they did provide an effective mechanism for consultation and feedback.

Assessment

158 Arrangements for the assessment of postgraduate research students are set out in Section G of the ARP. Research students are normally assessed by two examiners, one of whom must be an external examiner. Where a candidate is also a permanent member of staff, an additional external examiner is appointed. Examiners must have research experience in the general area of the thesis and, where possible, specialist knowledge of the research topic. Normally, at least one external examiner should have experience of examining two or more research degree candidates. Proposed arrangements for the examination of research degree students must be approved by the relevant faculty and URDC.

159 The oral examination is chaired by an independent member of staff who has experience in supervising and examining research degrees, and an understanding of the institution's policies and procedures for assessment of research degrees. The respective roles and responsibilities of the examiners and the independent chair are set out in guidance notes for research degree examinations, and are discussed during training events for supervisors and independent chairs. The final decision for the award of a research degree is made by URDC, based on the reports and recommendations of the examiners. The audit team formed the view that these arrangements provided an effective framework for maintaining consistency in the assessment of research degrees.

160 The students who met the audit team confirmed that they were aware of what was expected of them with regard to assessment, and spoke of how their supervisors helped them to develop clear plans for managing their research project through to completion.

Representations, complaints and appeals arrangements

161 Information about student complaints and appeals is included in the ARP, the University's Higher Degrees by Research Code of Practice, the Handbook for Research Degree Students (which includes links to the Students' Complaints Procedure and the Complaints Form), and the Student Handbook for the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Practice.

162 The audit team concluded that the University's arrangements for maintaining academic standards and the quality of postgraduate research degree provision are sound and appropriate to its scale and aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

Section 7: Published information

163 The University publishes a wide and comprehensive range of information in a variety of formats for prospective and current students and other stakeholders. It has taken the decision to reduce its print-based information and to begin the transition to web-based material, particularly through the website, the iCity portal, and its virtual learning environment. Platforms and infrastructure for these are developed and maintained by the University's central unit for Corporate Information and Communication Technology. Corporate publicity and management of the website is the responsibility of the Marketing and Communications Department. Following a review, the Web Development Team is redesigning the whole site to improve navigation and access to information for students and other users, with improved control based on a new content management system, which is administered by small coordinated teams across the University who take ownership of particular areas of the site. Phase one, focusing on general University-level information, was launched in January 2010 and a second phase, integrating faculty sites, is currently under

way. Internal documentation is held on a number of separate central electronic repositories, for example the Academic Registry SharePoint site, and the University is currently discussing how these might be integrated.

164 The University's Publication Scheme complies with the Freedom of Information Act and is maintained by the Information Manager, based in Library and Learning Resources. The Academic Registry is responsible for making available to students and other stakeholders the information relating to academic standards and quality recommended in Annex F of HEFCE 06/45, and reports on this to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC). The audit team confirmed that the institution's mission, Corporate Plan, Learning and Teaching Strategy, and home-based programme specifications are available on the University's public website, although it learned that programme specifications for collaborative provision have been temporarily removed while the typology of such provision is reviewed. The other components of the Teaching Quality Information dataset are available to external applicants upon request. Quantitative information required by external bodies, for example the Higher Education Statistics Agency, Unistats and UCAS is submitted by the appropriate central departments, Academic Planning, the Academic Registry, and Marketing and Communications.

165 Academic and administrative staff share responsibility for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the University's published information available to students. Marketing and Communications produces the prospectus, which includes both home and UK-based collaborative provision. It is currently available in both web-based and printed formats, but the University has decided to move to an entirely online version. Executive deans are ultimately responsible for the accuracy of programme content, but delegate quality management to faculty staff, while the Academic Registry supplies programme status information. The University sends pre-entry information to all new students and has also launched a welcome website. The student written submission reported general satisfaction from student surveys about the quality of pre-entry information, although it noted differences across faculties with particular issues raised by international, Business School, and part-time students. It accepted, however, that the University is taking steps to standardise such information. The audit team learned that the University is developing a student Essentials Guide, which it believes will address the concerns raised.

166 Each faculty and central department is responsible for the accuracy of all information it publishes for current students, in whatever format. The Academic Registry maintains and updates Academic Regulations and Policies, programme specifications, and core University information to be included in all student handbooks. It issues all student award certificates and transcripts for both home and collaborative provision. For UK collaborative arrangements, the name of the partner is recorded on the transcript and the certificate. For international arrangements, the certificate refers to the transcript, which records the name of the partner and language of instruction. A Diploma Supplement booklet is issued to all graduating students. Individual Diploma Supplements/Higher Education Achievement Reports are included in the implementation plan for the new student record system.

167 A student handbook is published for each programme leading to a University award, wherever delivered. It may be hard copy or electronic but must use the approved template issued by the Academic Registry. The sample viewed by the audit team contained accurate and comprehensive information about the specific programme and general University services and procedures. Following increasing concern at the handbook's length, a revised format (the Course Guide), which omits information held on the website, is being piloted and evaluated during 2010-11. Student information of all kinds is increasingly migrating to the University's virtual learning environment, including support materials from central

departments and teaching aids for every module, for which the University has established minimum requirements. The audit team learned that the iCity portal provides students with a personalised navigation tool to access a wide range of information, including that for complaints and appeals. Programme specifications and student handbooks are scrutinised by approval/re-approval panels, and formally approved by Senate before publication.

168 Students who met the audit team confirmed the view of the student written submission that, overall, there is a very high level of satisfaction with the accuracy and completeness of information about the University, their own programme, and what is expected of them.

169 In accordance with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, the University publishes a record of its UK and overseas collaborative partnerships and programmes on its website as part of its publicly available information. This is restricted to academic institutions and does not include non-educational organisations with which the University has a collaborative arrangement under its flexible/work-based learning framework. The University sets out its requirements to ensure the accuracy of information relating to its awards published by its collaborative partners in each agreement and its operations manual. Executive deans are responsible for approving programme information, although the audit team found the operational delegation of this to be unclear. Partners are required to send proposed publicity material to the Academic Registry, which annually checks a sample of partner websites for accuracy. However, the team noted cases where inaccurate information about the University or its programmes was published on partner websites. The University will wish to monitor all such sites on a regular basis to ensure the accuracy and currency of published information, as part of strengthened management process for UK and overseas collaborative arrangements.

170 The audit team scrutinised a broad sample of published information, both print and web-based, including that made available on the Unistats website. The University is keeping the management of its published information under review and is developing improvements in the ways it communicates with its students and other stakeholders.

171 The audit team found that, overall, apart from the exception noted in paragraph 169, reliance can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the University publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

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