Leeds Trinity & All Saints

May 2009

Annex to the report

Contents

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited Leeds Trinity & All Saints (the College) from 19 to 21 May 2009, 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 College delivers on behalf of the University of Leeds (the University).

Outcomes of the Institutional audit

As a result of its investigations the audit team's view of the College's is that:

- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the College's current and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards it delivers on behalf of the University

- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the College's current and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The College has adopted a systematic approach to the appraisal and enhancement of the quality of students' learning opportunities across all levels of the institution.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

The College's arrangements for postgraduate research students are soundly based, and the research environment and postgraduate research student experience meet the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 1*.

Published information

Reliance can largely be placed on the accuracy of the information the College publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of the awards it delivers on behalf of the University, but some problems of communicating with students have yet to be resolved, and aspects of accuracy and accessibility would benefit from management attention.

Features of good practice

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

- the planned and strategic review of the committee structure and the inclusive and effective manner in which its findings were implemented (paragraph 6)

- the meticulous tracking of actions through the committee system (paragraph 8)

- the use of the summary overview of external examiners' reports to contribute to the maintenance of standards and the enhancement of learning opportunities (paragraphs 13, 19, 69)

- the distinctive character, strategic importance and successful outcomes of the College's well organised and effectively implemented placement scheme for all students (paragraph 58)

- the clarity and comprehensiveness of assessment criteria (paragraph 28)

- the identification of the enhancement opportunities provided by the introduction of academic profiles (paragraphs 62, 68).

Recommendations for action

The audit team considers it would be desirable for the College to:

- ensure that external examiners' reports are shared with student representatives as a matter of course, in accordance with HEFCE 06/45 (paragraphs 12, 40, 86)

- revise its module descriptor forms to make clear the relationship between module and programme learning outcomes (paragraph 17)

- facilitate student access to the rules on progression and classification of awards (paragraphs 29, 85)

- move expeditiously towards a decision on the anonymous-marking of coursework (paragraph 30)

- take steps to put in place the timely delivery of training for all student committee representatives (paragraph 43)

- consider further its range of mechanisms for achieving the full and active participation of students in quality management (paragraphs 44, 71)

- improve academic departments' liaison with Learning Information Services, to facilitate the timely and systematic provision of learning resources for new and existing programmes (paragraph 50)

- undertake a formal review of its engagement with an overseas partner institution (paragraphs 74, 84)

- improve the effectiveness of the ways in which it brings academic information to the attention of students (paragraph 86).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1   Since its inception in 1980 on the amalgamation of two former Roman Catholic colleges, the College has offered programmes leading to awards of the University of Leeds (the University). It has 2,650 full-time equivalent students, mainly full-time undergraduates, and 110 full-time equivalent teaching staff.

The information base for the audit

2   The College provided a Briefing Paper and supporting documentation. The audit team also had access to the report of the previous Institutional audit (May 2003) and the review of research degree programmes (July 2006). It received hard copies of all documents referred to in the Briefing Paper and other documentation requested in the course of the audit; the majority of materials were also made available electronically. The Students' Union also produced a written submission, setting out students' views generally, their experience as learners and their role in quality management. The team thanks the Union for its submission.

Developments since the previous audit

3   The College's previous Institutional audit resulted in a judgement of broad confidence in the institution's current and likely future capacity to manage the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards. The audit identified seven features of good practice (in brief: its use of the intranet; student-staff academic committees; the use of surveys in quality assurance and enhancement; its use of the Academic Infrastructure; student support; its self-evaluation document for the audit, and its management of external examining), and considered

it desirable for the College to (in brief): incorporate greater externality into quality management; improve the functioning of faculty quality and standards committees, and formalise the training of student representatives. The present audit team found that the College has successfully addressed two of these recommendations; the training of student representatives is the subject of a very similar recommendation on this occasion (see paragraph 43).

4   In 2008 the College approved a new Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, developed on the basis of consultation with staff and students and supporting the Strategic Plan by 'meeting the needs of individuals and supporting them in achieving successful outcomes and becoming effective lifelong learners'. Senior staff described this as 'putting students first'. The Strategy identifies five key principles that underlie its approach to enhancing the student experience: engage, empower and increase the independence of students; personalise learning and feedback as much as possible; learn from others and innovate in the curriculum and pedagogy; integrate learning, its support, scholarship and research where appropriate, and affirm and recognise excellence. The College intends that its recently established Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee will monitor and annually review institutional and faculty action plans, formally evaluating the Strategy's effectiveness in academic year 2010-11.

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

5   Academic Board, chaired by the Principal and Chief Executive, is responsible for: the College's academic work and activities; leading strategic academic development; safeguarding academic standards; assuring students' learning opportunities, and advising the Board of Governors on educational resource issues. It discharges these responsibilities largely through subordinate committees, notably: the Academic Standards Committee; the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, and the Research and Enterprise Committee. In accordance with the accreditation agreement, the University appoints representatives to institutional-level committees.

6   In the academic year 2006-07 the Board of Governors commissioned an Effectiveness Review to identify possible improvements to governance and management. This involved widespread consultation and led to significant changes to culture and structure. These include: greater clarity as to the responsibilities of deliberative committees; more effective communication among them, particularly through a regular meeting between the Principal and committee chairs; improved linkage between heads of department and Academic Board, and the revitalisation of pre-Board 'surgeries' (associated with a greater representation of academic staff on the Board). The audit team identifies as a feature of good practice the planned and strategic review of the committee structure, and the inclusive and effective manner in which its findings were implemented.

7   In the academic year 2007-08, the College undertook a review of the portfolios of senior staff, redesignating assistant principal posts as vice principal, to reflect their strategic and deputising functions. Responsibility for quality assurance was transferred to the Vice Principal (Registrar); the post of Vice Principal (Academic) was established to focus on academic development; the Director of Learning and Teaching became the Director of Learning, Teaching and Research, and a new post, Academic Registrar, assumed operational responsibility for quality assurance. The enhanced post, Planning and Information Officer, was designed to improve the use of statistics and information in support of quality assurance and enhancement.

8   The Quality Support Unit plays a broad and significant role in central administration. Its duties include: maintaining the Academic Quality Handbook; organising validation events and internal academic audits; administering, analysing and reporting on student surveys; coordinating student-staff academic committees; coordinating external examining, and supporting senior committees. The audit team, noting the general efficiency with which committees are supported, and particularly the meticulous and productive action-tracking systems, which dynamically capture the implementation and consequences of committee

decisions, considers the meticulous tracking of actions through the committee system a feature of good practice.

9   The College is structured academically around three faculties (Arts and Social Sciences; Education, and Media, Business and Marketing). Each faculty is led by a dean and divided into departments, whose heads are responsible for all aspects of academic leadership and development. Faculties' deliberative structures vary in detail, but all faculties have a quality and standards committee with fixed terms of reference, and all departments have a student-staff academic committee, also with fixed terms of reference; the minutes of the latter are received by the former. Substantial discussion about the latter committees follows later in this annex (see paragraphs 41-43).

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

External examiners

10   The College uses external examiners at subject level, with a procedural examiner sitting on the College Board of Examiners. Nominations for subject examiners originate in departments, are considered in detail by the Academic Standards Committee on the basis of open criteria, and require University agreement. The terms of appointment contain a termination procedure. Roles and responsibilities are clearly specified in handbooks; these are openly available and sent to examiners on appointment. The audit team confirms that the handbooks, which make constructive reference to the Academic Infrastructure, are comprehensive and appropriate.

11   Both categories of external examiner are required to submit reports to the Vice Principal (Registrar). Subject examiners are asked to comment on both quality and standards issues; the procedural examiner on adherence to regulations and the Academic Infrastructure; fairness and equity (including the monitoring of discretion); administrative arrangements, and the scope for procedural enhancement. The audit team scrutinised a number of external examiners' reports, and confirms that their format is appropriate and prompts well-focused discussion and debate.

12   The Academic Standards Committee considers subject external examiners' reports early in the academic year to ensure that faculty quality and standards committees address all concerns with expedition. At its final meeting of the year, the Committee receives feedback on actions taken in response to external examiners' reports. The audit team noted that student members of student-staff academic committees do not have full access to the reports, which do not routinely feature on the agendas of these committees. Given that this procedure does not meet the expectation of the Higher Education Funding Council, it is desirable for the College to ensure that external examiners' reports are shared with student representatives as a matter of course, in accordance with HEFCE 06/45.

13   The Academic Standards Committee receives an overview report of matters raised by external examiners, for ultimate submission to the University. This report identifies: generic issues relating to quality and standards, a recent example being second-marking policy; matters for institutional consideration and action for the following academic year, for example module failure rates and aspects identified as good practice for College-wide dissemination. The audit team, noting the seriousness with which such reports are treated at all levels, including the active role played by the Academic Standards Committee in highlighting generic issues requiring attention, considers the use of the summary overview of external examiners' reports to contribute to the maintenance of standards, and the enhancement of learning opportunities a feature of good practice.

Programme approval, monitoring and review

14   For the sake of convenience, all aspects of programme approval, monitoring and review are described in this section.

15   The Course Validation Committee is responsible for considering proposals for new programmes and the amendment of existing programmes, and for the reports of panel events and the formal responses and action plans resulting from them. These responsibilities will be transferred to the Academic Standards Committee in academic year 2009-10, when the present Committee is abolished. The Course Design and Approval Handbook specifies institutional expectations as to the structuring of programmes: the audit team, which noted that the guidelines address all relevant aspects of the Academic Infrastructure, saw evidence of the usefulness of this approach, in programme approval in particular.

16   Programme approval, which was modified at the start of the present academic year to enhance consistency and focus increasingly on enhancement, is a five-stage process, of which the third, involving the faculty quality standards committee, and fourth, a validation panel with external membership, stages are the main points when proposals receive detailed consideration. All proposals require evidence of engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. The audit team, on the basis of detailed scrutiny of this process, confirms that it is probing and challenging in its concern for standards and coherence of programme design.

17   Major and minor modifications do not require a validation panel, but involve discussion with students, a University representative or external adviser, and an external examiner. While the audit team considers the procedure generally robust, it noted that, in contrast to the situation with module and programme approval, where consideration of the relationship between the two sets of objectives is required to ensure that the former contribute to the latter, the module descriptor pro forma does not demand any such articulation. It is desirable for the College to revise its module descriptor forms, to make clear the relationship between module and programme learning outcomes, both at the point of approval and subsequently in revised programme specifications.

18   Annual review, which takes place at departmental, faculty and College levels and is based on the evaluation of modules rather than programmes, culminates in an annual review report submitted to the dean by each department. This report includes: student module evaluations; staff-student academic committee reports; assessment results; statistics from the annual Learning and Teaching Survey; National Student Survey data; external examiners' reports; reports from the University's subject representative, and a range of statistical data. Reports are required to address retention, progression and achievement data, and the impact of curriculum developments and modifications. While no requirement to examine academic standards exists, the audit team noted examples of standards-related issues being raised; examples identified included abnormal assessment results and the impact of non-attendance on progression.

19   Departmental reports contribute to the faculty annual review report submitted to the Academic Standards Committee, and faculty review reports, in turn, form part of the basis of the annual review report, which constitutes the College's main submission to the University. The Academic Standards Committee, on receipt of all faculty reports, identifies items requiring attention, assigning members to assess each one and ensure that every item is thoroughly addressed in a timely manner. The audit team considered the most recent institutional-level report a concise but comprehensive evaluation of the quality of learning and teaching; it identifies six key actions for improvement, including the audit of quality assurance processes and the revision of the research and scholarship strategy, and devotes a full section to the discussion of academic standards. The team noted that this represents further evidence of the College's vigilance in pursuing action to secure the standards of awards (see paragraph 13).

20   Overall, the annual review process is conscientiously undertaken and confirms the College as a self-reflective institution, as well as one committed to the exercise of institutional oversight of the quality of learning opportunities and the academic standards of the awards it delivers on behalf of the University.

21   Periodic review, which occurs quinquennially and normally takes a department as the unit of attention, is known within the College as an internal audit. Its main purpose is to

assure Academic Board that: departments effectively monitor and maintain academic quality and standards; academic quality and standards of provision meet College aspirations and external expectations, including the Academic Infrastructure; the curriculum is current and valid; effective student learning is promoted and delivered; an enhancement strategy is in place, and academic standards are equivalent to those delivered by the University. Internal audit teams contain College and University staff, as well as independent external specialists or professionals. The College's procedural document places students 'at the core of the process' and expects the department to engage students to participate actively; the internal audit team routinely meets students, although teams do not include a student member. The Institutional audit team noted that internal audit places considerable emphasis on academic standards: for example, in one case, the internal team scrutinised in detail a judgement of limited confidence made with respect to one department's approach to revalidation, a conclusion reached after an intensive and well-managed process.

22   On the basis of its scrutiny of a range of documentation, which included several examples of self-evaluations supported by a wide range of data, audit reports and formal responses, the audit team confirms that internal audit is fit for purpose, engages external advice and expertise appropriately to the maintenance of standards and the management of academic quality, and is manifestly capable of making robust judgements.

23   In addition to internal audit but with much the same procedure, the College has a facility for commissioning thematic audits; such audits are undertaken individually rather than cyclically. The first, and so far the only, thematic audit, on professional development placements (see paragraph 58), took place a year prior to the audit visit. The event itself, although substantively helpful, was not without procedural difficulties, and the College is currently reflecting on the experience, and has yet to decide on its future.

24   It is confirmed that the contribution of programme approval, annual review and periodic audit to the assurance of the quality of students' learning opportunities and the management of academic standards is wholly adequate, and that the process meets the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

25   For the sake of convenience, all aspects of institutional engagement with the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points are described in this section.

26   In its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, the College expresses a commitment to learning from others in the areas of curriculum and pedagogy. All documentation relevant to the concerns of this audit makes extensive reference to the Academic Infrastructure: the Academic Standards Committee ensures that each section of the *Code of practice* is given systematic consideration by both individual staff and the committee system; in internal audit external members are asked to judge programme currency and validity with respect to subject benchmarks and the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ); the same reference points apply to programme specifications, all of which also map programme assessment objectives and skills developed against each component module. The examples of programme specifications scrutinised by the audit team confirm that the procedures are punctiliously followed. The College also takes serious account of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies requirements, where the team noted an occasion when senior committees conscientiously tracked an action required by a professional body.

27   The audit team found that the College makes visible and frequent use of external reference points in assuring the quality of students' learning opportunities, and in setting and maintaining academic standards.

Assessment policies and regulations

28   College assessment policies, procedures and regulations are available to staff and external examiners in the Guidance for Examiners and the Taught Course Academic Regulations; the latter are also available to students. These documents provide detailed information on the roles and responsibilities of all individuals and bodies concerned, noting in particular those of the Chair of the Panel of Examiners, who is responsible for ensuring: the proper management and conduct of assessment arrangements in the relevant subject area; that clear general criteria are specified for use in the marking of all assessed work, and that the criteria are published and made available to students and examiners. The audit team, confirming the widespread availability of these criteria and, in particular, the helpful nature of the module criteria laid out in detail in module handbooks, considers the clarity and comprehensiveness of assessment criteria a feature of good practice.

29   The fullness and accessibility of this information contrast with the inaccessibility of information on degree classification and progression rules. Students were uncertain about both. The audit team established that: classification rules are available in the Taught Course Academic Regulations, which, while publicly available, are unlikely to be read by students and are not explicitly drawn to their attention, and the indicative criteria used to determine borderline cases are not divulged to students. The team was unable to establish the benefits accruing from maintaining the confidentiality of this, admittedly complex, procedure, and in the interests of transparency, it is desirable for the College to facilitate student access to the rules on progression and classification of awards.

30   The College has recently responded positively to representations by the Students' Union to the effect that a regulation making satisfactory attendance an eligibility criterion for assessment was inconsistently applied, by withdrawing the regulation itself. On the other hand, at the time of the audit, the Students Union had for some time been making similar representations on the anonymous-marking of coursework: the College had responded to this by instituting a research project to investigate the suggestion, with a reporting timescale as late as 2013. While the team cannot comment on the proposal itself, given that the envisaged timescale aligns uncomfortably with the commitment (see paragraph 4) to 'putting students first', it is desirable for the College to move expeditiously towards a decision on the anonymous-marking of coursework.

Management information - statistics

31   The College makes extensive use of management information in respect of quality and standards. At departmental level, annual review reports include an evaluation of information on recruitment, retention, progression and achievement; the audit team particularly noted the use of a trend analysis of grade distributions. At corporate level, the Academic Standards Committee routinely monitors quality and standards on the basis of data including: external examiners reports; entry profiles; progression and performance figures; faculty quality and standards committee minutes; student surveys, and faculty annual review reports. The team particularly noted one valuable document submitted to the Committee, Statistical Indicators: Analytical Report, which identified such issues as variations between different programmes in the progression and award classification data it learned that this report, aided by the recent appointment of a Planning and Information Officer, will be further refined in future years. While the team also noted that a paper on module failure rates by the Vice Principal (Registrar), who judged the fact that first-year failure rates were showing an upward trend in most subject areas, to be of sufficient severity to require special attention, had not, in spite of a minute expressing concern, been addressed formally by the time of the audit, seven months later, it understands that this omission stemmed mainly from temporary difficulties in recruiting to the post of Planning and Information Officer.

32   Overall, and with due reference to the recommendations contained in this section, the audit team concludes that confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the College's present and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards it delivers on behalf of the University.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

33   For the sake of convenience, all aspects of programme approval, monitoring and review were described in the previous section, where it was noted that the procedures in place contribute appropriately to assuring both academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities; they also meet the expectations the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review.*

34   Also for the sake of convenience, all aspects of institutional engagement with the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points were described in the previous section, where it was noted that the College engages actively and systematically with all such reference points.

Management information - feedback from students

35   The College deploys a variety of mechanisms to ascertain student opinion of both academic and support services; it is committed both to using the findings to inform quality assurance and enhancement, and to keeping the mechanisms themselves under review. The results of programme and module evaluation questionnaires are analysed for the coordinator, head of department and dean, and discussed by both the relevant student-staff academic committee and faculty quality and standards committee. A formal procedure for responses to be made and followed-up is in place, and the findings are used to inform the departmental annual review report. Both staff and students told the audit team that the questionnaire system is effective in eliciting student opinion, although students reported that they were not always made aware of resultant action.

36   At college level, the Quality Support Unit (see paragraph 8) conducts an annual learning and teaching survey, on the basis of which, together with the results of the National Student Survey, it submits an extensive analytical and statistical report to all relevant committees. The report, which benchmarks findings against the sector and previous years' results, is used to compile an action plan, the objectives of which are tracked through the committee system. The audit team noted the importance the College assigns to the outcomes of the surveys and the systematic efforts made to respond at all levels.

37   The audit team considers that the College has effective and thorough mechanisms for gathering and responding to internal and external surveys of student opinion, and that it is working in a sustained way to enhance them.

Role of students in quality assurance

38   The College's Student Charter specifies students' rights, privileges and obligations. These include the right to be provided with opportunities to evaluate their programme and experience, but not: to be represented within institutional deliberative structures; to participate fully in the quality management of their own learning, or to be involved in institutional decision-making. The Charter is reviewed annually by the Principal and triennially by the Board of Governors; these reviews are not formally undertaken in partnership with the Students' Union, although the audit team learned that the Union is invited to contribute informally. Students who met the team had little knowledge of the Charter.

39   The Students' Union is represented on: the Board of Governors and some of its committees; Academic Board and its key committees; the Equality and Diversity Committee and the Student Discipline Committee. In most cases, the President, as one of two sabbatical officers, exercises this right. The Union also participates in strategic planning exercises, in particular, taking part in a joint Board of Governors' and Academic Board away day early in 2009.

40   The College, acknowledging that it has yet to achieve the active engagement of all student representatives, commissioned a report on student representation and feedback in the academic year 2007-08. This led to suspending the Governors' Student Affairs Committee on

which students were represented; removing student representation from faculty quality and standards committees, which had proved less successful than student-staff academic committees in engaging student interest and commitment; charging the then newly-formed Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee with overseeing the student experience, and giving consideration to commissioning an externally managed student survey. These recommendations reflected the view that the College had sufficient mechanisms for the student voice to be heard, and that the representation system generally had improved. The audit team, in reflecting on these recommendations, which, the College acknowledges, swim against the tide of current practice, noted that faculty quality and standards committees are a forum which would provide programme representatives with the opportunity to see and discuss external examiners' reports (see paragraphs 12, 86) and to participate in quality management.

41   All departments are required to establish a student-staff academic committee, the membership of which includes elected student representatives from each level of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. While the College regards such committees, which have a wide-ranging brief as a key element of its quality framework, the audit team noted that they are consultative not executive. They do not, for example, receive external examiners' reports or routinely discuss issues arising in them. Minutes are, however, submitted to the faculty quality and standards committee and form part of the evidence base for departmental annual review; and an annual cross-institutional overview of student-staff academic committee minutes is submitted to Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee.

42   Reviews of the effectiveness of student-staff academic committees confirm the view expressed in the student written submission that there is considerable variability in their workings. Agenda-setting is normally undertaken by staff; not all committees are active; maintaining student commitment is challenging; training of representatives has not occurred systematically since November 2007, and awareness of committee activities can be low. The audit team confirms that some committees meet irregularly and that their minutes are not invariably discussed by faculty quality and standards committees. Students who met the team were aware of the student representative system, but student-staff academic committees could not be described as central to their experience.

43   The College, which has given considerable thought to the workings of these committees, is aware of the issues and giving thought to possible remedies. The audit team encourages it to continue doing so, possibly in the context of the broader review, on which it is minded to embark, of how the student voice can be better heard and how students will know this is the case. Nevertheless, given that the College does not utilise programme management committees, the present committees are currently the only formal channel for students to be involved in quality-related deliberation. Ensuring that representatives are trained would seem a minimum requirement for such committees to succeed, and the team echoes the view of the previous Institutional audit team which the College, in spite of initial attempts to do so, has yet to succeed in addressing, that it is desirable for it to put in place the timely delivery of training for all student committee representatives.

44   The audit team appreciates that in a small collegial institution informal means of communication can appear more effective than formal ones, and that careful thought is required as to how best to handle the fact that a culture of collegiality is necessary, but not sufficient, if students are to be engaged as full partners in the management of their learning. The team welcomes the College's attempts to reassess this area of activity, and considers it desirable for it to consider further its range of mechanisms for achieving the full and active participation of students in quality management.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

45   The College does not claim to be a research-intensive institution, but aims to strengthen the link between research and scholarship, on the one hand, and the enhancement of learning and teaching on the other. This ambition is consistently reflected in a suite of related strategies, including: Research and Scholarship, currently under revision with a view to enhancement; Staff Development; Learning, Teaching and Assessment, and Human Resources. It is similarly reflected in such quality management procedures as: the annual module review template, which requests details of research and scholarly activity; the guidelines on course design, which expect higher programme levels to reflect staff scholarship and be research-informed; the self-evaluation for internal audit, which includes an assessment of research and scholarship's impact on provision; the format for annual departmental review reports, which requires an evaluation of research and scholarship and their impact on learning and teaching; the creation of the post of Director of Learning, Teaching and Research, and the appointment of departmental research champions.

46   Management information data indicates that some 40 per cent of academic staff members are engaged in research or scholarly activity. While this is by no means evenly spread, one faculty currently being considerably more research-active than the other two, the audit team notes the College's efforts to support research, including establishing a research network; faculty and departmental seminars; instituting personal research and scholarship plans in professional development review; personal research and scholarship allowances; research training; protected research time, and support for research degrees.

47   The audit team concludes that in a small minority of departments student learning is underpinned by considerable research strengths, and that the College has taken steps to help all staff members demonstrate how scholarly activity informs and enhances their teaching. In discussion with the team, College managers demonstrated a realistic awareness of strengths and weaknesses in this area, showing themselves to be making systematic efforts at institutional level to promote the spread of a research culture and to ensure that, in the longer term, it underpins the curriculum.

Resources for learning

48   The College takes an integrated approach to the provision of learning resources, which are now the responsibility of the Director of Learning & Information Services. Its e-Learning Strategy constitutes a framework for development, and it has recently established a new intranet and a virtual learning environment offering 24-hour access; after some teething problems, students regard this as a valuable addition to learning support, particularly given that an increasing number of modules have e-learning provision, a facility which students, in their written submission, hope will increase. The College is extending its internet connection to halls of residence, and has introduced an on-campus wireless network.

49   User surveys of the College's learning resources have revealed disappointing levels of satisfaction with library services in particular. Some 30 per cent of students consider library provision insufficient, a proportion that has grown over the last three years; this finding is consistent with successive national student surveys, which have found lower than average levels of satisfaction. The College has reviewed the effectiveness of its management of learning resources in the light of these findings, and a review of library resources undertaken by the Director of Learning & Information Services in 2008 identified several areas for improvement: management of student expectations; better response to resource analysis enquiries during programme approval; improved liaison with academic departments; greater use of resource packs for final-level students, and Learning & Information Services' representation on student-staff academic committees. A further report, submitted in March 2009, referred to: late feedback on book purchase orders from academics, resulting in significant underspend of the budget; book purchasing almost a year in arrears, and minimal impact from the changes implemented to address concerns two years previously. This report is currently under discussion.

50   The audit team accepts that: the College has arrangements in place for the management of its learning resources; it is sensitive to the results of user surveys, and it is attempting to take action to improve provision. Nevertheless, these problems are by no means new, and the team considers it desirable for the College to improve academic departments' liaison with Learning Information Services, to facilitate the timely and systematic provision of learning resources for new and existing programmes.

51   Under the College's accreditation agreement, students are entitled to use the University Library, albeit without remote access to electronic resources. Although this agreement will lapse in the case of students enrolled on programmes leading to the College's own awards, the College is committed to negotiating a commercial agreement with the University to permit access to the University Library for such students. In the longer term the College expects to move towards self-sufficiency of learning resources for taught programmes of study.

Admissions policy

52   The Executive Team determines and monitors annual admission targets, periodically reporting on progress to Academic Board. The Admissions Policy specifies College entry criteria, so setting a framework for recruitment within which programmes set their own requirements and procedures. Registry Services receives and processes applications, forwarding those that meet institutional and programme requirements to faculty admissions tutors. Its Operations Manager has delegated authority to take admissions decisions for taught provision a similar delegation in respect of research degrees is vested in the Director of Learning, Teaching and Research; there are also monitoring decisions made by admissions tutors to ensure fairness and the correct application of entrance criteria. Registry Services further supports such tutors by: meetings and discussions; an annually updated information pack, and data from feedback surveys. Departmental staff spoke highly of this support.

53   The College does not have a formal widening participation strategy, but expresses its commitment in activities that include school and college liaison, Foundation Degrees, and targeting external funding. The College is currently considering a paper recommending improving the focus and coordination of its efforts to improve the recruitment and retention of students from under represented groups.

54   The audit team confirms that the College's polices and procedures are effectively managed by Registry Services in coordination with staff in academic departments, and meet the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education*.

Student support

55   The College is formally committed to providing students with integrated and effective academic, pastoral and financial guidance in an environment promoting equality and diversity. Central support is delivered through Student Support Services, comprising: counselling; health; careers; dyslexia and disability support; student advisers; support administrators, and senior residents in halls of residence. Other central units providing support include: the Chaplaincy; Registry Services; the International Office, and the Employer Partnerships Office. Although the student written submission described student support as excellent, the College is currently aiming to enhance it, by exploring best practice within the sector and improving linkages between central support units and other support providers.

56   At departmental level, the progress tutor system aims to integrate pastoral and academic support. Progress tutors' duties include: monitoring attendance; supporting participation in personal development planning; increasingly acting as placement supervisors (see paragraph 58), and, in some departments, returning assessed work. The system, about which both the student written submission and the students who met the audit team were generally positive, while pointing also to a degree of variability in tutors' performance, is carefully monitored, and a number of potential enhancements are currently under consideration; these relate particularly

to improving retention rates, a priority aim in which the College has invested heavily. Programme and module handbooks viewed by the team were found to be generally satisfactory, although both their content and their online availability vary somewhat across departments.

57   The College's vocationally orientated programmes, which are associated with a strong record of graduate employment, constitute a strong feature of institutional provision. The audit team noted that: modules in personal development planning are delivered across all degree programmes; the work of the Careers Service is central to institutional promotion, planning and delivery, and, in particular, considerable emphasis is placed on the professional placement scheme.

58   This scheme, which provides both practical experience and career-focused learning, requires all students to undertake one or two 20-credit, six-week placements in industry, commerce, education or another appropriate setting: when taken in the second year, such placements contribute to the degree classification. The College has a well-developed structure for planning, supporting, monitoring, evaluating and developing the scheme, which was also the subject of a thematic audit in 2008 (see paragraph 23), and for ensuring that it meets the expectations of the relevant section of the *Code of practice*. In addition to making recommendations for development, this audit highlighted: the unique nature of the provision; students' belief that it enhances their employability; positive feedback from participating employers, and the number of students offered posts (temporary or permanent) by their placement employer. Subsequently the College has undertaken a review of employer engagement, which will contribute to a planned Employer Engagement Strategy to complement its Employability Strategy. From its scrutiny of documentation and its discussions with staff, the audit team confirms the distinctive character, strategic importance and successful outcomes of the College's well organised and effectively implemented placement scheme for all students, together constitute a feature of good practice.

59   Students spoke of the friendliness of the College and accessibility of staff, although they also considered communication mechanisms overly complex and not clear, partly due to the duplication of methods used, which has resulted in confusion. Overall, however, from its discussions with students and staff, and its scrutiny of documentation, the audit team considers that the College's support systems are effective in being known to students, meeting their needs on a continuing basis, and being integrated with the learning process.

60   On the basis of the information available and the evidence gained from meetings with staff and students, the audit team confirms that the College's arrangements for student support are appropriate and effective.

Staff support (including staff development)

61   Staff appointments are governed by clear policies; where possible, appointment panels include a University representative or alternative external member. The audit team confirms that appointment procedures are rigorous and fair. Induction arrangements are in place, and newly appointed academic staff, with fewer than three years' higher education experience, are expected to enrol for the University's teaching award scheme; progress is monitored and successful completion of a specified proportion of the programme mandatory. The College has only five postgraduate research students; in response to student requests, a training scheme for those with teaching responsibilities is under consideration, but the College has determined to sanction such teaching only with caution.

62   Professional development review (appraisal) is obligatory; the most recent report stated that 84 per cent of staff had completed and submitted forms. The scheme reviews individual performance, development needs and aspirations within the context of the College's strategic objectives; staff members informed the audit team that the system achieves an appropriate balance between individual and institutional priorities, for example, by opening the door to funded leave opportunities. The scheme is now supported by centrally held academic profiles (curricula vitae). These were first compiled to address the application for taught degree awarding

powers and are now to be maintained and updated annually in order to: ensure the currency of staff expertise; demonstrate how research and scholarship contribute to teaching; inform professional development review, and strengthen external quality engagements. The team considers the identification of the enhancement opportunities provided by the introduction of academic profiles a feature of good practice.

63   A significant proportion of the staff development budget is devolved to faculties. Deans produce their own staff development plans in alignment with the College Plan; faculty plans are subject to institutional-level approval, monitoring and review. Institutional responsibility for staff development rests jointly with the Directors of Human Resources, and Learning, Teaching and Research, who alternately chair the Staff Development Monitoring Group and, between them, manage the budget. This Group, which has a restricted membership and normally meets termly, reports to the Executive Team on the take-up of development opportunities; its present and possible future remits are currently under review.

64   The College operates a workload planning model; a teaching observation scheme, with which full engagement has yet to be achieved, is also in place. Detailed procedures for academic staff promotion and reward, which are designed to acknowledge the full portfolio of academic duties, are readily available; a new procedure for the appointment of professors and readers has recently been introduced.

65   The audit team considers that the College is aware of, and is addressing, the requirement for highly qualified staff through its appointment and staff development procedures, and confirms that current arrangements ensure that academic staff are academically and, where appropriate, professionally competent to deliver the higher education programmes for which they are responsible.

66   The audit team concludes that confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the College's present and likely future management of the learning opportunities available to its students.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

67   The Vice Principal (Academic) has executive responsibility for quality enhancement, a strong institutional commitment to which is discernible in: the Strategic Plan; the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (see paragraph 68); the Employability Strategy; and the e-Learning Strategy. All these strategies, as well as the Effectiveness Review (see paragraph 6), are accompanied by comprehensive action plans; there is clear assignment of responsibility for implementation; and senior committees undertake regular progress monitoring.

Enhancement initiatives

68   The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy identifies underpinning practices, including: the appointment of high-quality staff committed to teaching, scholarship and research; the induction and development of staff new to teaching; support for subject and pedagogic scholarship and curriculum development, and the dissemination of innovative and effective practice. The introduction of academic profiles, already identified as a feature of good practice (see paragraph 62), has the potential to be a useful tool for identifying the development needs of academic staff within professional development review.

69   In relation to the Effectiveness Review, the College anticipates that the increased representation of academic staff on Academic Board and the creation of a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee will continue to drive enhancement; the audit team considers this a plausible expectation. The College makes effective use of external examiners' reports to inform its enhancement agenda; the overview of such reports presented to the Academic Standards Committee and Academic Board has already been identified as a feature of good practice (see paragraphs 13, 19).

Management information - quality enhancement

70   The College considers quality enhancement, reference to which, it is confirmed, appears in the documentation, an important element of its approach to programme approval, monitoring and review. Departmental annual reviews are required to include a strategy for enhancement and, since such reviews contribute successively to faculty overview reports and the College Annual Review Report, it is reasonable to describe the concept as embedded at all levels of the institution. In its briefing paper, the College also associated other aspects of its procedures with quality enhancement, including: the use of statistical data; external examiners' and other external reports; student feedback; the use of external assessors in approval and review; the engagement of College staff as external examiners or external panel members; staff members' engagement with the Higher Education Academy and professional associations; institutional reflection on external bodies' reports, and the embedding of the Academic Infrastructure into institutional processes and practices. While accepting the value of such practices, however, and in particular their contribution to quality management, the audit team questions whether they can all be described as deliberate steps taken at institutional level to improve the student experience.

71   The College makes effective use of a range of statistical data (see paragraph 31), including data on recruitment, enrolment, retention, progression and achievement; in appointing a Planning and Information Officer (see paragraph 7) it has further strengthened its capability in this area. The College seeks to engage students in a variety of ways in quality assurance and enhancement, and is assiduous in collecting, acting on and tracking the responses made to student feedback on educational provision: the audit team confirms that the results of such surveys lead to timely and detailed action plans, which are addressed at all institutional levels. Nevertheless, reference has already been made to unresolved difficulties relating to student representation (see paragraph 44) and the College accepts that it yet to engage students fully and actively in quality enhancement.

Enhancement dissemination

72   The College employs a variety of methods of identifying and disseminating good practice: the external examiners' report form invites its identification; the overview report is lodged on the intranet to aid it; annual review reports at department and faculty level identify it; an annual College Learning and Development Day includes presentation of collated features on good practice and the Leadership Development Day, and the staff development programme, similarly address the issue.

73   It is confirmed that the College has adopted a systematic approach to the appraisal and enhancement of the quality of students' learning opportunities across all levels of the institution.

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

74   The College stated that it does not have any collaborative arrangements as defined in the *Code of practice*. Nevertheless, the audit team gave detailed consideration to its relationship with an overseas university in respect of an arrangement relating to six awards. A Memorandum of Understanding permits the partner institution's final-year undergraduates or graduates to apply, as individuals, to enter the final year of study at the College, on successful completion of which they receive a second undergraduate degree from the University of Leeds. The College takes the view that this arrangement, being neither an articulation agreement nor a dual award, is not strictly collaborative, and did not draw it to the attention of the audit team. Nevertheless, the Memorandum alludes to joint undergraduate degree programmes; the partner institution is advertising the possibility of dual awards with the College; and there is evidence that a host department in the College regards the arrangement as based on such awards. The College may wish to consider the risks associated with the re-use of credit in an academic collaboration that does not involve progression to a higher academic level, and which does not, and, since the

College does not consider the agreement a collaborative arrangement as defined by QAA, is not intended to, meet the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*. In order better to assess the risks, it is desirable for the College to undertake a formal review of its engagement with an overseas university.

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

75   The College has five part-time postgraduate research students reading for the University award of MPhil or PhD: all are in one faculty, most are in a centre of excellence in one department, and all but one are graduates of the College. The College participated in the QAA special Review of research degree programmes in 2006: this confirmed that its ability to secure and enhance the quality and standards of provision was appropriate and satisfactory. The College has since addressed the Review's one recommendation by including student representation on its Research and Enterprise Committee.

76   The College's arrangements for research degree students have been mapped against the relevant section of the *Code of practice* and the University's Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature. The Research Degree Student Handbook specifies how the College has implemented the requirements of the latter in particular, including offering details of arrangements for consultation with, and obtaining feedback from, students, staff and external examiners. The audit team found this publication generally informative and helpful, noting, however, that it does not wholly reflect the recent changes in management arrangements in relation to research students. The Handbook would be strengthened were it to explain more fully the availability or otherwise of opportunities for teaching experience, and the University's electronic library resources, which can be accessed on-site only (see paragraph 51).

77   The College identifies the key elements of its research environment as: not being a research-led institution; only accepting students where it has research strengths and where it can secure close cooperation with equivalent subjects at the University; joint College and University supervision arrangements, whereby all students have a second supervisor from the University as well as access to the University's services and facilities, and the availability of both institutions' library and information services. The audit team confirms that these arrangements are satisfactory in conception and, subject to the observation in the previous paragraph, clearly communicated.

78   Following the Effectiveness Review, the Research Committee was reconstituted with a wider brief as the Research and Enterprise Committee, chaired by a dean on a three-year rolling basis. Following the departure of the former Director of Research, the responsibilities associated with the post have been distributed among the Vice Principal (Academic), the Director of Learning, Teaching and Research, and the Postgraduate Research Tutor.

79   The Postgraduate Research Tutor's responsibilities include: the admission, progress and welfare of research degree students; providing support and development for College supervisors; submitting regular progress reports to the Research and Enterprise Committee, and liaison with the University, with which the postholder is the main point of contact. This latter responsibility means that the Tutor engages in a range of formal reviews of the working of the relationship, bringing issues emanating from the University to the College's attention and dealing with operational issues relating to admission, where recommendations are subject to University approval, induction, progress and supervision. In broad terms the Postgraduate Research Tutor's liaison activities mean that the College can interact with the University as if it were a University faculty.

80   The University Code of Practice and the Research Student Handbook specify research students' rights and responsibilities. For example: their supervisor will be research-active, all supervisors were entered in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise and trained; as part-time

students they can expect to meet their College supervisor at least five times a year, with the University supervisor attending three of these meetings; a training-needs analysis is conducted and a personal development plan agreed during induction; general progress and development needs are assessed formally at the end of the first year, at the transfer meeting, which, in the case of part-time students, takes place within two years of registration, and annually thereafter; reports of review meetings are presented to the Research and Enterprise Committee; students receive a written report on their progress; they are entitled to access a range of training and development opportunities provided by the University, these are aligned with the requirements of the research councils, and they have access to the Vitae programme for postgraduate researchers, of which the University is the regional host. The audit team, while it cannot, on the basis of a meeting with one postgraduate research student, confirm that these rights are routinely enforced, has no reason to believe they are not, and the College's interactions with the University suggest that the latter is generally satisfied with the supervisory arrangements appertaining.

81   Assessment follows the procedures of the University in all respects; it is confirmed that students are made fully aware of regulations and criteria. The College operates a complaints procedure, details of which are available via the intranet; appeals are a University responsibility.

82   The College's arrangements for postgraduate research students are soundly based, and the research environment and postgraduate research student experience meet the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

Section 7: Published information

83   Responsibility for preparing data returns to external statutory agencies, including data on the UNISTATS website, and for producing internal management information reports, is vested in the newly appointed Planning and Information Officer; prospectuses and other publicity material lie within the remit of the Director of Marketing and Communications. The College stated that procedures for ensuring the accuracy of material published on the website are set out in the College's revised Information Communications and Technology Strategy, but from the information provided the audit team was unable to confirm that this is so.

84   The audit team explored the College's response to the requirements of HEFCE 06/45 concerning the public availability of information about academic standards and quality of higher education provision. It was explained to the team that the restructuring of the College's website at the start of the present academic year into an external website and an intranet had resulted in information about academic standards and quality being located on the intranet, which is only accessible to staff and students. The College plans to address the issue of external access to its Academic Quality Handbook and to other Quality Support Unit publications as part of its current review of the intranet. In addition, as noted above (see paragraph 74), inaccuracies exist in the description on the partner institution's website of the College's engagement with an overseas university.

85   A wide range of information is made available to students and prospective students: their perceptions of it are monitored in the annual Learning and Teaching Survey, and a hierarchical sign-off system is in place, to ensure that such information is accurate and consistent. The audit team reviewed a range of such information, including: prospectuses; student handbooks, and programme, module and placement handbooks. In doing so, while confirming its general accuracy and appropriateness, it noted that programme-level information is not always available on the intranet; and, consistent with an earlier recommendation (see paragraph 29), that information on the rules for progression and classification of awards is either not readily available or regarded as confidential.

86   The students' written submission did not discuss the accuracy of information published by the College, but it did comment generally favourably on the availability and utility of various handbooks, including programme and module handbooks, placement handbooks and a guide to

academic writing. The same submission noted that student representatives had made suggestions for improving electronic communications with students at student-staff advisory committees, taking the view that the former student handbook (to which reference is made in the preceding paragraph) could have been improved, had it been made available online with separate links to each section. Students who met the audit team confirmed the general accuracy of the information made available to them, but reiterated the view that scope exists for improving the effectiveness of communications. In addition, as indicated above (see paragraphs 12, 40) the College acknowledged that it has not yet put in place arrangements to share external examiners' reports as a matter of course with student representatives. While it is possible that a current review of communications will address these concerns, it is desirable for the College to improve the effectiveness of the ways in which it brings academic information to the attention of students.

87   Reliance can largely be placed on the accuracy of the information the College publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of the awards it delivers on behalf of the University, but some problems of communicating with students have yet to be resolved, and aspects of accuracy and accessibility would benefit from management attention.