

University College London

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Printed copies are available from:

Linney Direct
Adamsway
Mansfield
NG18 4FN

Tel 01623 450788

Fax 01623 450629

Email qaa@linneydirect.com

Preface

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) exists to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education (HE) qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of HE.

To do this QAA carries out reviews of individual HE institutions (universities and colleges of HE). In England and Northern Ireland this process is known as institutional audit. QAA operates similar but separate processes in Scotland and Wales.

The purpose of institutional audit

The aims of institutional audit are to meet the public interest in knowing that universities and colleges are:

- providing HE, awards and qualifications of an acceptable quality and an appropriate academic standard, and
- exercising their legal powers to award degrees in a proper manner.

Judgements

Institutional audit results in judgements about the institutions being reviewed. Judgements are made about:

- the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards
- the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the institution publishes, and about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards.

These judgements are expressed as either **broad confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence** and are accompanied by examples of good practice and recommendations for improvement.

Nationally agreed standards

Institutional audit uses a set of nationally agreed reference points, known as the 'Academic Infrastructure', to consider an institution's standards and quality. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*, which include descriptions of different HE qualifications
- *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of the what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study. They outline the intended knowledge, skills, understanding and attributes of a student completing that programme. They also give details of teaching and assessment methods and link the programme to the FHEQ.

The audit process

Institutional audits are carried out by teams of academics who review the way in which institutions oversee their academic quality and standards. Because they are evaluating their equals, the process is called 'peer review'.

The main elements of institutional audit are:

- a preliminary visit by QAA to the institution nine months before the audit visit
- a self-evaluation document submitted by the institution four months before the audit visit
- a written submission by the student representative body, if they have chosen to do so, four months before the audit visit
- a detailed briefing visit to the institution by the audit team five weeks before the audit visit
- the audit visit, which lasts five days
- the publication of a report on the audit team's judgements and findings 20 weeks after the audit visit.

The evidence for the audit

In order to obtain the evidence for its judgement, the audit team carries out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the institution's own internal procedures and documents, such as regulations, policy statements, codes of practice, recruitment publications and minutes of relevant meetings, as well as the self-evaluation document itself
- reviewing the written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences
- exploring how the institution uses the Academic Infrastructure.

The audit team also gathers evidence by focusing on examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work using 'audit trails'. These trails may focus on a particular programme or programmes offered at that institution, when they are known as a 'discipline audit trail'. In addition, the audit team may focus on a particular theme that runs throughout the institution's management of its standards and quality. This is known as a 'thematic enquiry'.

From 2004, institutions will be required to publish information about the quality and standards of their programmes and awards in a format recommended in document 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance*, published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The audit team reviews progress towards meeting this requirement.

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Summary

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited University College London (UCL) from 6 to 10 and 16 to 17 March 2005 to carry out an institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards offered.

To arrive at its conclusions the audit team spoke to members of staff and to current students, and read a wide range of documents relating to the way UCL manages the academic aspects of its provision.

The words 'academic standards' are used to describe the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an award (for example, a degree). It should be at a similar level across the United Kingdom.

Academic quality is a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their awards. It is about making sure that appropriate teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them.

In institutional audit, both academic standards and academic quality are reviewed.

Outcome of the audit

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

- broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of UCL's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and the academic standards of its awards.

Features of good practice

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

- UCL's integrated international strategy, which, with its wide-ranging implications for the composition of the student body, the nature and delivery of the curriculum

and the development of strategic international partnerships, is indicative of its ability to effect strategic change

- UCL's innovative and considered approach to developing, and its strategic approach to implementing its equality action plan
- the induction, mentoring and development of the teaching skills of new members of staff and the work of the Staff Development and Training Unit, and of the Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching
- the close coordination of tutorial and supervisory support and student advisory and counselling services, in which the Dean of Students plays a key role.

Recommendations for action

The audit team also recommends that UCL should consider further action in a number of areas to ensure that the academic quality and standards of the awards it offers are maintained. The team advises UCL to:

- complete the regularisation of annual monitoring as expeditiously as possible, ensuring that it is implemented in a systematic and consistent way, and that procedures are in place to identify and act upon any consistent themes which emerge.

It would be desirable for UCL to:

- complement its intention of reviewing the quality and accuracy of programme specifications by a programme designed to identify best practice and convince departmental level academic staff of programme specifications' potential to enhance the student learning experience
- ensure that in future all external examiners are advised in a timely manner of the formal response made to their reports
- ensure that its student representative system and feedback systems operate effectively throughout the institution
- take optimal advantage of the strategic benefits in information management and communication afforded by its new records system

- review the Postgraduate Teaching Assistant Scheme and monitor more closely the use of part-time and hourly paid staff, in order to identify and disseminate good practice in training and mentoring.

Summary outcomes of discipline audit trails

Architecture; chemistry; English language and literature; psychology; public policy

The audit team looked at the following areas of provision: architecture; chemistry; English language and literature; psychology; public policy, to establish how well UCL's systems and procedures were working at the discipline level. UCL provided the team with documents, including student work, and the team spoke to staff and students. As well as confirming the overall confidence statements given above, the team considered that the standard of student achievement in the five discipline areas was appropriate to the title of the awards and their place in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The team considered the quality of the learning opportunities available to students was suitable for programmes of study leading to those awards.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings the audit team also investigated the use made by UCL of the Academic Infrastructure which QAA has developed on behalf of the whole of UK higher education. The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points that help define both good practice and academic standards. The findings of the audit suggest that UCL has responded generally appropriately to the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and the *Code of Practice for the assurance of quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA, though further work is required if the potential utility of programme specifications is to be exploited.

In due course the institutional audit process will include a check on the reliability of the information set published by institutions in the format recommended in the Higher Education Funding Council for England's documents - *02/15: Information on quality and standards in higher education*, and *03/51: Final guidance*. The findings of the audit are that UCL is alert to the requirements of these documents and is addressing its responsibilities in this respect.

Main report

Section 1: Introduction

The institution and its mission

1 University College London (UCL), founded in 1826, was the first higher education institution (HEI) in England to admit students regardless of race or religion, and the first to admit women on equal terms with men. It defines its strategic objectives as: to be a world leader in teaching, scholarship and research across the sciences and arts, serving local, national and international needs; to be at the forefront in tackling humanity's environmental, health care and communication challenges; to be an employer of high calibre staff whose diversity and creativity it celebrates; and to be true to its founders' pioneering vision by providing high quality educational opportunities to all those capable of benefiting, regardless of background.

2 UCL employs 8,000 staff, and has approximately 12,000 undergraduates and 7,000 postgraduates, with over 25 per cent of the student body from outside the UK. It claims to be a world-class research-led institution, and has achieved consistently outstanding ratings in successive research assessment exercises. It awards degrees from the University of London but enjoys a high level of autonomy in respect of both taught and research degrees, its activities in respect of the latter being, in practice, restricted only by the examination process which remains formally a University of London responsibility.

3 UCL has experienced a rapid growth in student numbers over the last 11 years, mainly due to a number of mergers, with student numbers rising from 7,813 undergraduates and 3,226 postgraduates (total 11,039) in academic year 1992-93 to 11,986 undergraduates and 7,005 postgraduates (total 18,991) a decade later. In recent years this expansion has been accompanied by a degree of financial stringency, although UCL states that firm measures have been put in place to bring the situation under control. This period has also been accompanied by a number of changes of Provost. The present incumbent took up office on 1 August 2003.

Collaborative and distance-learning provision

4 UCL has only a limited number of distance-learning programmes and no franchising or validation arrangements.

Background information

5 The published information initially available for this audit included the report of the Continuation Audit (August 2000) and reports of eight subsequent subject reviews. UCL provided the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) with a critical self-analysis, five discipline self-evaluation documents (DSEDs) and supporting documents for the areas selected for discipline audit trails (DATs). The audit team was given access to all documentation referred to in the critical self-analysis, and all further documentation requested was provided promptly and efficiently.

The audit process

6 UCL had for some time been in communication with QAA concerning its intended application for taught and research degree-awarding powers and, after detailed discussion, it was agreed that the scrutiny associated with this application would be combined with institutional audit. A number of revisions were made to the normal institutional audit methodology, which on this occasion took place over a two-week period, albeit buttressed by activities in connection with the degree awarding powers application undertaken outside this timeframe. The first week of the audit visit entailed nine institutional-level meetings, both for briefing and audit purposes and to provide opportunities for the audit team to undertake associated planning, reading and discussion. In the second week, five DATS were undertaken, in architecture, chemistry, English language and literature, psychology and public policy. A separate team of discipline specialists was appointed for this activity, though the appointment of one of the discipline audit team to liaise between the audit team and the DAT team, by attending some of the activities of the former and therefore act as a conduit between

the two teams, ensured complementary approach between institutional and discipline-level enquiries.

7 A preliminary meeting between the Assistant Director and UCL representatives took place on 13 January 2005, at which UCL was informed of the disciplines selected by QAA for DATs. UCL was advised of the identity of the audit team on 27 January 2005 and that of the discipline auditors on 31 January 2005. DSEDs, which took the form of documentation associated with internal quality reviews updated as necessary, were received on 17 February 2005. The institutional-level audit took place on 7 to 10 March 2005; the DATs were conducted on 16 to 17 March 2005.

8 At the preliminary meeting the Assistant Director had been advised that the Student Union (SU), disappointed at the low response rate to a questionnaire and aware that to do so was optional, had decided against making a separate student written submission (SWS). Following this meeting, however, UCL initiated further discussions with the SU, with the result that a SWS was received on 11 February 2005. The audit team is grateful to those involved in preparing it.

9 At institutional level the audit team had the benefit of discussions with the Provost, senior institutional staff with responsibility for quality and standards, SU representatives, research students, institutional managers at vice-provost, decanal and departmental levels, non-professorial academic staff, the Chairman and members of Council, and support staff for both staff and students. At the end of the visit a report was prepared on UCL's application for taught and research degree awarding powers, and submitted to QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers for its meeting on 24 May, whence it was forwarded for consideration by the Privy Council. The present report was produced following the completion of that process.

10 The institutional audit team comprised Professor AJ Davies, Professor N Goddard and Ms AJ Kettle. The discipline audit team

comprised Professor A Gale (link auditor), Dr C Amodio, Professor J Baldock, Professor A Jago and Professor D Shellard. The audit secretary was Ms N Evans, and the audit was coordinated for QAA by Professor R Harris, Assistant Director.

Developments since the previous quality audit

11 UCL was subject to a QAA Continuation Audit in 2000, which commended it for nine points of good practice and identified four topics where further action was advised. In particular, UCL was advised to review the efficiency of its committee structure, with a view to securing improved effectiveness, timeliness and clarity of function; to develop its use of student data to facilitate effective implementation of the widening participation strategy and inform institutional maintenance and enhancement of standards; to make specified adjustments to its handling of external examiners' reports; and to make explicit the mechanisms by which it seeks to ensure comparability of academic standards. During the present visit the audit team took the opportunity of monitoring UCL's response to this advice.

12 In response to the first of these recommendations UCL has made efforts to simplify its arrangements, undertaking a comprehensive review of key aspects of the structure of committees and subcommittees operating under the auspices of Academic Committee, including clarifying the locus of responsibility for programme development, examinations and assessment policy. All committees are reviewed regularly by Governance Committee, a body with sole delegated authority to sanction the creation of new committees. Nonetheless, with 54 standing committees and 21 standing subcommittees in addition to Council and Academic Board, UCL acknowledges that its committee structure remains complex, and that scope exists for further streamlining and clarification. UCL has addressed the second recommendation, which involved developing its use of student data, by strengthening its

consideration of a range of student statistics. Nonetheless, the methodology of annual monitoring reviews, where departmental level consideration takes place, is largely devolved and, therefore, operationally variable. UCL plans, however, to limit these variations in the near future, and at the time of the audit visit a preferred model of operation had been identified and, in anticipation of some continued variability of practice, minimum requirements were being specified by the Quality Management and Enhancement Committee (QMEC). In response to the third recommendation, UCL has reviewed its management of external examiners' reports. In response to the fourth recommendation it has not yet developed an explicit statement of its mechanisms for seeking to ensure comparability of standards and intends to address this issue in the process, now being undertaken, of developing an explicit quality strategy.

13 In the view of the audit team UCL has responded in a measured way to the suggestions made in the Continuation Audit report. An annual report is made to QMEC on progress made in relation to these recommendations and to the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure. Nevertheless, some matters have still to be fully completed: in particular the harmonisation of institutional award schemes and the development of a consistent scheme for departmental annual monitoring.

Section 2: The audit investigations: Institutional processes

The institution's view as expressed in the critical self-analysis

14 The Provost, UCL's principal academic and administrative officer, is appointed by, and accountable to, Council. The Provost is supported by five vice-provosts with functional responsibilities, with a sixth shortly to be appointed. There are a number of pro-provosts (currently four, with more appointments under consideration), of whom three have

international responsibilities and report to the Vice-Provost (Academic and International). The Provost chairs the senior management team (SMT), which comprises the vice-provosts, the eight executive deans of faculty and one director of a postgraduate institute, representing the postgraduate institutes collectively. SMT lies outside the formal committee structure, but meets weekly and is described by UCL as advising the Provost in the exercise of his functions as Chief Executive Officer and as providing a strategic framework for the formal committee structure.

15 Academic Board is UCL's senior academic authority, but its membership of more than 900 effectively precludes executive decision-making and it acts largely in an advisory capacity to Council. The Provost described the Board to the audit team as both a safety valve and a sounding board - respectively permitting a large body of academics to put forward their view on important issues and proposed changes, and enabling him to engage with the views of senior and experienced members of academic staff.

16 UCL operates a carefully developed and defined delegation policy, involving the existence of a large number of specialist committees with extensive powers in respect of matters falling within their remit. All 54 standing committees report, directly or indirectly, to Council or Academic Board, often in the sense of informing the senior body of actions taken through delegated powers. Of especial significance for this report is Academic Committee, which, chaired by the Vice-Provost (Academic and International) and with a membership which includes the Provost, the deans, the senior tutor and faculty tutors, the Head of the Graduate School and the Dean of Students, is at the apex of a pyramidal structure of teaching and learning committees operating at departmental, faculty and institutional levels. Academic Committee has delegated powers (inter alia) in relation to the learning and teaching strategy, the assurance of academic standards, quality management and enhancement, and staff development. A total of 18 subcommittees or other bodies report

directly to Academic Committee (some of which report also to other committees). These range from the Careers Advisory Committee to the Language Centre Board of Management; but, of most relevance to this report, include QMEC, the Programme Development Executive Sub-Committee, the Undergraduate and Graduate Education Executive Subcommittees, the Executive Sub-Committee on Innovations in Learning, Teaching and Assessment and the institution's Board of Examiners.

17 The Academic Manual and Guidelines for Good Practice (the Gold Book), produced by Academic Committee, are the primary sources of information on academic regulations. The Manual, a compendium of statements of academic policy and good practice, first produced in 1992, now exists only as a web publication. Competent procedures exist to ensure that regular updating occurs and that staff are informed annually of all revisions. The Gold Book, also web-based, has sections on staff support, student recruitment and reception, student support, teaching function and process, programme design, operation and review, student input and feedback, assessment and careers advice. A review of the Gold Book, to ensure its consistency with the Academic Manual, is currently taking place, with a number of further revisions also being made.

18 The Provost's Green Paper, published in February 2004 initiated wide-ranging and institution-wide consultations which led to new planning responsibilities being given to faculties by the UCL White Paper, which followed some months later, and which envisaged a ten-year strategy designed to enhance UCL's ambition to be seen as a world-class institution. The White Paper identified, among the steps needed to achieve this goal, the development of faculty, departmental and operational services' strategic plans, a formal annual monitoring and review process and a series of externally-led reviews of all major areas of activity.

19 Apart from a number of specialist academic units, UCL's academic structure is based on a faculty model. Its eight faculties are Arts and Humanities; the Built Environment;

Clinical Sciences; Engineering Sciences; Laws; Life Sciences (Biological and Medical); Mathematical and Physical Sciences; and Social and Historical Sciences. Faculties, permitted certain variations in structure and organisation but normally sub-divided into departments, are charged with promoting interdisciplinary teaching and research, and act as conduits between academic departments and central policy-making bodies. Deans of faculty, until recently elected, are now appointed by Council to reflect their increased managerial responsibilities under an increasingly devolved system. In addition to their institutional-level responsibilities as members of SMT, they have, among other duties, responsibility for liaising with heads of department, overseeing quality assurance and enhancement matters, and financial management. Heads of department, appointed by Council on the recommendation of the Provost, meet with him collectively twice termly to facilitate communication and ensure their awareness of, and involvement in, key institutional policies.

The institution's framework for managing quality and standards, including collaborative provision

20 QMEC has responsibility for coordinating preparations for, and responses to, external reviews of institutional provision, and for monitoring the operation of internal quality reviews, as well as for overseeing UCL's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure and teaching quality information (TQI) requirements.

21 While departments are required to confirm that they have taken note of relevant subject benchmarks, the audit team noted in the course of the DATS, the slightly variable extent to which they routinely address the Academic Infrastructure, with some programme specifications in particular being of limited usefulness, and also that, at several points, the critical self-analysis signalled a concern that staff commitment to quality could be diminished by the imposition of 'quality jargon' or time-consuming bureaucratic procedures. Nonetheless, following observations of

meetings of Academic Committee and its new Programme Development Executive Sub-Committee, the team was confirmed in its view that institutional-level control of departmental and faculty operations is being clarified, and in some cases developed, to the benefit of quality assurance and enhancement.

22 The audit team appreciates UCL's tradition of quasi-autonomous departments, and that the transition to a more managed environment has not invariably been straightforward or appreciated. Nonetheless, it is of the view that UCL is moving in a responsible manner towards a position in which it has greater oversight of departmental practices, and is satisfied both that the present trajectory is likely to continue, and that the levels of personal responsibility taken by departmental staff are very high. In particular, at no point did the team identify any areas of practice which, in its view, fall below an acceptable quality threshold.

23 The critical self-analysis argued that quality and standards depend principally on academic staff and students, and quality management and enhancement should be driven by academics and, therefore, devolved as close as possible to programme level. While appropriate faculty and sub-faculty committees have been established as a result of this formal devolution, the audit team noted that the prevailing institutional culture has traditionally been for many academic and pastoral matters to be handled at local rather than central level, often with longstanding variability of, for example, quality assurance procedures and degree classification criteria. Formalising delegation within a context and culture privileging departmental freedom over management control has sometimes proved challenging.

24 Academic Committee's establishment of a working group on examinations and assessment policy-making led to the adoption of an institutional assessment strategy at the start of academic year 2004-05. UCL has a well-established policy on the provision of information to students, stipulating the provision of full details of assessment methods, including the precise nature of course

components; submission deadlines; the provision of feedback on the quality, strengths and weaknesses of the work accompanied by a clearly defined grade or class; the method and timing of final course results; the nature of the examination process; and the requirements for progression or a final award. It was found in the DATS that assessment rules and procedures are clear, concise and understood by students; that students are provided with detailed and constructive written and oral feedback on assessed work; and that good practice exists in such forms as electronic submission and feedback. A further review of assessment policy, designed to take account of developments in educational technology and pedagogy as well as assessment issues relating to the international strategy and equal opportunities, is currently being undertaken.

25 In the course of the DATS, a range of assessment modes appropriate to the learning outcomes of specific subject areas was identified, including continuous assessment of coursework and laboratory work, assessed tutorial performance and open-book examinations, student portfolios and laboratory reports. It was found that assessment criteria were understood by staff and communicated to students, and that marking was conducted in line with defined protocols and with the full involvement of external examiners who play a central role in the procedures.

26 Academic Committee's Graduate Education Executive Sub-Committee, chaired by the Head of the Graduate School, defines and approves relevant policy and procedures, while the Graduate School itself provides support for students through its skills development programme, research funds, scholarships and codes of practice. Research students advised the audit team that they are extremely happy with the research environment. Appropriate procedures and documentation are in place to deal with admission, induction and progression, and the Graduate School has recently introduced an electronic log as an alternative to the existing paper version for monitoring a student's research career. At the time of the audit the uptake was

rather low which suggests a possible need for a proactive approach to encouraging use of this potentially very useful facility.

The institution's intentions for the enhancement of quality

27 UCL's draft revised learning and teaching strategy perceives enhancement as being achieved through responses to annual monitoring of programmes and courses, quinquennial review and internal quality review; and course and programme initiatives including the peer observation of teaching, career development through staff development and institution-wide critical debate. It defines the goals of quality enhancement as ensuring that programmes and courses are as well-designed and delivered as possible; its strategy focuses on supporting teachers, ensuring that review procedures have specific enhancements among their outcomes, and providing appropriate opportunities for professional development.

28 Internal quality review (IQR), which lies at the heart of UCL's academic quality operations, emerged as the successor to a compliance-based system and is based on a prototype (with different nomenclature) implemented in academic year 2000-01. IQR engages less with programme review per se than with departmental-level (or inter-departmental-level) programme management, and with learning resources, staff development arrangements and students' educational experience. The department under review is required to produce a self-evaluative statement, addressing the management of its programmes and their constituent courses, and to do so in a developmental rather than solely compliance-based manner. Central to the process is the facilitation of the sharing of good practice and the identification of areas open to improvement. The audit team confirms that IQR procedures were adhered to in the DATS, in the course of which examples of departmental responses to recommendations, and increasingly positive staff attitudes to the quality regime, were also identified.

29 A similar procedure, the 'non-academic IQR' has recently been introduced in respect of non-academic units providing student services, with a necessarily variable methodology but with the aim of enhancing the quality of users' experience by measuring units' performance against specified service standards.

30 A particular dimension of enhancement is UCL's international strategy, an initiative which aims to internationalise the teaching and research agenda, and which has significant implications for its future strategic direction. The strategy embraces a wide-ranging set of proposals designed to reflect and further UCL's ambition to forge strategic partnerships with world-class institutions; to review student support services to ensure that they are appropriate to the needs and expectations of projected annual increases in international student numbers; to develop the study abroad tutor system and the Study Abroad Office to support a projected year-on-year increase in the numbers of students studying abroad; to initiate a wide-ranging curriculum review to ensure that, from the next academic year, all programmes of study contain an international dimension; to review the academic framework to reflect issues of equivalence in international qualifications, including a number of specific assessment issues; and to expand the Graduate School's training programme to include an international dimension.

31 While noting that aspects of it have yet to be fully implemented, the audit team concludes that UCL's integrated international strategy constitutes a feature of good practice, citing its wide-ranging implications for the composition of the student body, the nature and delivery of the curriculum and the development of strategic international partnerships as indicative of its ability to effect strategic change.

32 The critical self-analysis claimed that UCL pays particular attention to equal opportunities policy and practice, and its Equality Policy and Action Plan, underpinned by ten corporate equality objectives and developed by a group of students and staff, has been judged an exemplar of good practice by HEFCE. This Plan addresses employment, teaching and learning,

and student support, and requires each department, guided by its equal opportunities liaison officer, to develop initiatives with measurable outcomes. The main responsibility for developing and implementing the equal opportunities policy lies with the Committee for Equal Opportunities, whose meetings appear to the audit team to be constructive and sensitive, and marked by especially thoughtful contributions from student members. Each department is charged with developing initiatives supporting the objectives, with progress on implementation being reported annually to the Committee for Equal Opportunities. The audit team was advised that aspirational workforce equality targets for black and minority ethnic junior administrative and support staff and female senior academic-related staff are close to being achieved, and concludes that UCL's innovative and thoughtful approach to developing, and its strategic approach to implementing, its equality action plan constitutes a feature of good practice.

33 Overall, the audit team is satisfied that UCL is increasingly engaging with quality enhancement, and that the structures currently being put in place are contributing significantly to the achievement of a situation in which it will be able to assure itself of the comparability of the student experience across the institution. The team confirms that UCL has made progress towards creating structures within which enhancement can occur and, in particular, notes from the DATS that very high quality educational practices exist. The extent to which, however, such practices derive from local initiatives suggests that there is some way to go before institutional-level data can be said to constitute a basis for the assured enhancement of the experience of all students, irrespective of discipline.

Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

34 Proposals for new programmes of study are scrutinised by Academic Committee's Programme Development Executive Sub-Committee, supported by steering groups

responsible for programme and course approval, programme review and the evaluation of external or collaborative programmes.

35 The quinquennial programme review system, with strong and mandatory external involvement, was revised in 2004, and is now a central feature of UCL's quality regime. Under this system combined studies degrees are monitored at institutional level by the new Programme Review Steering Group, with departments required to identify such issues as complementarity or overlap of syllabus, and issues relating to recruitment, progression and achievement.

36 As noted above, (paragraph 13) UCL does not currently have a consistent form of annual monitoring in place. The audit team formed the view that at discipline level such monitoring, while generally effective, will be enhanced following the implementation of the current plan to specify minimum requirements, clarify responsibility for departmental quality management and ensure the existence of appropriate reporting mechanisms. In future the model for annual monitoring will be the procedures of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (any departures from these procedures requiring QMEC approval). The audit team considers it advisable for UCL to complete the regularisation of annual monitoring as expeditiously as possible, taking any steps necessary to ensure that it is implemented in a systematic and consistent way, and that procedures are in place to identify and act upon any common themes which emerge.

37 UCL's programme review policy requires a quinquennial review of all taught programmes to ensure they are operating in accordance with prescribed aims and objectives. The programme review timetable is coordinated with the IQR schedule so that a department's programmes, now defined as including their contributions to combined studies programmes, are normally reviewed in the academic year preceding its IQR. Combined studies degrees, monitored at institutional level by the new Programme Review Steering Group, are now also reviewed in the course of IQRs, with departments required to identify such

issues as complementarity or overlap of syllabus, and issues relating to recruitment, progression and achievement.

External participation in internal review processes

38 External input into the programme approval and quinquennial programme procedures is secured through scrutiny by an external adviser from the discipline concerned (normally though not necessarily a current external examiner) or by a relevant professional body in the case of professionally accredited programmes. A report is required covering such areas as the appropriateness of the level of award, aims and intended learning outcomes, the balance of assessment and the pathways through the programme; certification by the external scrutineer is a prerequisite for approval. Where a programme is subject to professional accreditation the department concerned is required to supply full information for central records.

39 The Continuation Audit report pointed to the desirability of UCL developing the contribution of administrative staff to the gathering and dissemination of external perspectives on quality assurance and enhancement. UCL responded to this suggestion by the involvement in the IQR system of external senior administrators from a wide range of HEIs. UCL has found this innovation a valuable means of extending the range of perspectives on which it draws for external advice as a means of quality assurance and enhancement and, more generally, of initiating and maintaining informal dialogues with senior colleagues from outside the institution. In the view of the audit team this is an interesting and potentially valuable means of UCL subjecting its review procedures to external comment and advice.

External examiners and their reports

40 All assessed work leading to an award of the University of London is subject to scrutiny by at least one external examiner, charged with ensuring that the standard of the programme of

study is appropriate for the award in question, and consistent both with equivalent awards in other HEIs in the United Kingdom and with relevant parts of the Academic Infrastructure. External examiners scrutinise all examination papers, see a representative example of scripts and moderate internal marking. The attendance of at least one examiner external to the University of London is mandatory at all examination boards.

41 External examiners report on a template which contains space for evaluative comments as well as 'tick-box' data. Reports are checked by the Registrar's Division and copied to the Chairs of the appropriate Board and of the Faculty Board of Examiners (a body whose membership comprises the chairs of all boards of examiners within the faculty), and, if they raise issues of concern or of wider significance, to the Chair of the institution's Board of Examiners. The reports of chairs of boards of examiners to the chair of the appropriate faculty board of examiners (who in turn reports to the Chair of the institution's Board) contain reference to responses made to external examiners' reports, and these are normally (though not as yet necessarily) forwarded to the external examiners concerned, as well as to members of the requisite board.

42 The audit team was able to explore, through the DATS, the level and nature of departmental engagement with external examiners. In all cases external examiners' reports (which were overwhelmingly positive) were addressed in a conscientious and professional manner. Nonetheless, in the view of the team the arrangements for external examining and report management, already satisfactory, would be further strengthened by the introduction of a procedure to ensure the timely provision of information to external examiners as to actions taken in response to their reports, and it would be desirable for UCL to ensure that this is done.

External reference points

43 UCL reported, in its critical self-analysis, that responsibility for ensuring its engagement

with the Academic Infrastructure currently rests with QMEC, instituted in 2001 as the successor to the former Quality Audit and Subject Review Sub-Committee and the Quality Assurance and Standards Planning Sub-Committee. Successive sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA, are checked by QMEC officers against current policy and practice, with a report made to the Committee on any action necessary in the light of the precepts. UCL stresses that it does not consider the *Code of Practice* a rule book, describing its relationship with it as one of informed and thoughtful engagement, involving a justification of the rare occasions when any practices are found to be at odds with the precepts. Relevant subject benchmark statements are addressed in all documentation for programme approval and review, with the departments concerned required to confirm that they have been taken note of. All programme provision has been mapped against the grade descriptors in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*; work on programme specifications is continuing, with arrangements being made for all such specifications to be made available on-line and for a more systematised approach to be taken to their review and development, in particular, by means of increasingly standardised annual monitoring arrangements.

44 The audit team notes that, while a degree of cultural resistance to engagement with the Academic Infrastructure continues to exist, the practical effect of this is relatively slight, especially given UCL's central mapping of the Infrastructure on to its own procedures, a practice which ensures that departmental-level engagement with the Infrastructure is, for the most part, indirect. Hence, while there is no reason to believe that current policy and practice are not consistent with the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure, it is likely that not all academic staff are aware that this is so. It does, in particular, remain the case that, in some parts of UCL, the potential utility of programme specifications in

particular has still to be fully realised. In the view of the team it would be desirable for this matter to be addressed institutionally, not only by monitoring the programme specifications themselves (which, it is understood, will be part of the proposed annual monitoring regime), but, more developmentally, by putting in place a programme to explain their logic and rationale to departmental-level academic staff and identify best practice.

45 So far as research students are concerned, the *Code of practice Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, published by QAA, has informed UCL's procedures which have been developed and maintained by the Graduate School. At the time of the audit visit UCL was completing its response to the revised *Code*. The audit team was informed that only minor revisions to procedures appear necessary and that these are currently being made.

46 Overall, the audit team is of the view that UCL has given full attention to the requirements of the FHEQ in relation to the levels of its programmes and is currently addressing the revised *Code of practice*. It has fully implemented the management frameworks issued by the relevant research councils, though the councils' training requirements are not mandatory for non-research council funded research students.

Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies

47 Since October 2000 UCL has been subject to eight QAA subject reviews, in which all provision was approved, two successful developmental engagements and a number of accreditation and other visits from professional, statutory or regulatory bodies, all of which resulted in approval or continuation.

48 UCL has also begun to make use of the experience of those members of its own academic staff who are engaged in external activities as a contribution to increasing its understanding of, and engagement with, the expectations of other stakeholders within the higher education sector, including employers as

well as professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. Accordingly UCL recently surveyed its academic staff to gather data on their experience with other HEIs at home and abroad, in professional practice and industrial research and development, and as reviewers for external agencies. The results showed substantial external activity on the part of such staff, especially in external examining and collaborative research, and UCL is currently considering how this experience and expertise can best be deployed in the interests of quality enhancement. The audit team was also informed that information about the professional qualifications and activities of new staff is held centrally, and that funding is available to record the achievements of existing staff and to link this effectively to the human resources database.

Student representation at operational and institutional levels

49 The student representation system, which entails committee membership at institutional, faculty and departmental levels, is fundamental to UCL's deliberative structure. At departmental level, each academic department is required to have a staff-student consultative committee, and all interdepartmental degree programmes have a programme-based committee. The Joint Staff Student Committee (JSSC) agreed in 2000 core constitutions and terms of reference for departmental staff student consultative committees and their programme-based equivalents, and has the responsibility for monitoring minutes of meetings; departments who do not return the required minutes are referred to the Dean of Students, as Chair of the Joint Staff Student Committee. General issues arising from the monitoring of minutes are reported annually to Academic Committee. Although discipline-level enquiries suggested that departmental staff-student consultative committees function effectively and responsively, the student written submission presented evidence of considerable variability, pointing to problems in finding student representatives, declining attendances in some areas where it appears to students that no action is taken to address their concerns, and difficulties in

obtaining the names of representatives or copies of minutes, both necessary for the SU to deliver training.

50 The audit team was additionally told by SU officers that for all UCL's good intentions, students' effectiveness on institutional committees varies, and that they can feel intimidated at Council meetings in particular. On the other hand, lay members of Council explained that although their business is sometimes only indirectly relevant to students who sometimes have to be encouraged to speak, when they do so their contributions are useful and valued.

51 The audit team was made aware by students with whom it had the opportunity of discussing the matter that the variable success of the representative system is not indicative of a breakdown in communication between staff and students, which is, on the contrary, very good, albeit often conducted at a level of informality. Nonetheless, it believes it would be desirable for UCL to ensure that its student representative system and feedback systems operate effectively throughout the institution.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

52 The use of student evaluation questionnaires to monitor the quality of teaching provision is a mandatory part of the quality framework. Guidelines on the core elements of questionnaires are available to members of staff responsible for questionnaire design and distribution in the Academic Manual; and the ways in which departments operate the system, analyse responses, respond to issues raised and inform students of their responses are monitored quinquennially by the IQR procedure and, normally but not yet necessarily, in annual monitoring. The audit team noted some concern in the SWS about the perceived lack of attention paid to such questionnaires by departments, and investigation at discipline level uncovered considerable variation in response rates, but also examples of very sound practice in designing questionnaires and providing feedback. While improving the effectiveness of the questionnaire

system has proved challenging, the team notes that a working group, including two students, has been instituted to review current policies and procedures as a whole, and is expected to report to QMEC towards the end of the present academic year.

53 In addition, response to specific concerns raised about the use of student feedback, and in spite of concern about questionnaire fatigue, UCL decided to introduce a centrally administered generic programme-level questionnaire in academic year 2002-03, implementation of which has been delayed pending the outcome of national discussions on a student feedback methodology.

54 UCL does not have a single institution-wide procedure for collecting and utilising advice and observations from graduates or employers.

Progression and completion statistics

55 In spite of the view of the Continuation Audit report as to the advisability of enhancing the analysis and deployment of student data, UCL acknowledges that it has some way to go in this area. In particular, one of its outstanding corporate objectives is to improve its equality monitoring data, an area where, as indicated elsewhere (see paragraph 32), its achievements have already been significant. Since academic year 2002-03 a standard range of student statistical data has been produced by the Registrar's Division to inform IQR, and, as the self-evaluation documents produced for the discipline audit trails were based on IQR documentation, the audit team was able to investigate the quality of centrally provided data and the use to which such data are put. While the team confirms that the data are, in most cases, used to monitor quality and standards, it is anticipated that the work on annual monitoring which is currently under way under the auspices of QMEC will lead to further development in the use and interpretation of student data, as will a new student record system to be introduced at the start of the next academic year, which, the audit team was informed, will make an integrated data package, including the research student log, available to departments.

56 The audit team notes that such a system has the potential to contribute significantly to quality enhancement, but also that, for this potential to be realised, a substantial programme of staff development for relevant departmental staff will be needed. Given the potential strategic benefits to be derived from its new student records system it would, in the view of the team, be desirable for UCL to take optimal advantage of the strategic benefits in information management and communication afforded by its new records system.

Assurance of the quality of teaching staff, appointment, appraisal and reward

57 UCL claimed, in its critical self-analysis, that the recruitment and retention of high quality staff lie at the heart of its educational mission; and it has achieved successful outcomes in a range of external reviews. The most recent academic staff survey, conducted in Autumn 2004, revealed that, of 1,437 respondents, 36 per cent have experience of postgraduate research examining and 90 per cent are active and recognised researchers and/or members of learned societies and relevant professional bodies. The DATS and IQR reports seen by the audit team, confirm that the quality of teaching staff is high and appreciated by students. The team notes that the aims of UCL's learning and teaching strategy include not only enhancing quality and academic excellence across the disciplines but also furthering the development and status of academic support staff.

58 The critical self-analysis acknowledged a possible tendency for teaching to be perceived as being of lesser importance than research. UCL has sought to combat this perception, first, by introducing a system of teaching awards which, though now under review at institutional level pending the possible introduction of a new scheme, has had the effect of raising staff awareness of the importance of recognising excellence in teaching. Secondly, and more fundamentally, UCL has introduced and promoted equal career routes and rewards for

both teaching and research-led promotion applications. Procedures for senior promotions contain guidelines for compiling a teaching portfolio and presenting a case based on teaching achievement, hence supporting UCL's claim that it operates a promotion pathway on the basis of the primacy of teaching-related activities supported by satisfactory contributions to research. Academic staff advised the audit team that teaching ability is certainly taken into account in promotion applications, and that they were aware, exceptionally, of promotions to reader and of the conferment of professorial title primarily on this basis.

59 UCL's human resources strategy identifies staff development and training objectives to meet current and anticipated future needs. Following the Continuation Audit report's suggestion that it would be desirable for UCL to secure the closer integration of appraisal and staff development, a revised staff review and development scheme was introduced in 2002. Under this scheme, which involves identifying appraisees' training and development needs, the Provost, vice-provosts, deans, heads of department and heads of administrative divisions are appraised annually, and other staff no less frequently than biennially. Training or development needs are forwarded to the Staff Development and Training Unit, and all academic staff met by the audit team confirmed that sufficient funds are available to meet identified training requirements. Operationally, heads of department appoint reviewers and ensure that all staff are reviewed in line with the scheme, the monitoring of which is the responsibility of Human Resources Division. Senior academic managers expressed particular appreciation of UCL's mechanisms for developing their skills; other academic staff confirmed that appraisal is duly carried out, and is useful in addressing staff development needs.

60 The audit team noted that the learning and teaching strategy involves monitoring the use of relief teaching staff, and was informed that, while the use of graduate teaching assistants, demonstrators and part-time teaching staff varies from faculty to faculty, every head of department

is aware of the requirement to provide suitable training for such staff. Staff confirmed to the team that such training is provided, with generic training courses offered by the Staff Development Training Unit. Nonetheless, in view of the fact that the postgraduate teaching assistant scheme was first implemented as far back as academic year 1994-95, in the view of the team it would be desirable for UCL to review the scheme and monitor more closely the use of part-time and hourly paid staff, in order to identify and disseminate good practice in training and mentoring.

Assurance of the quality of teaching through staff support and development

61 The Staff Development and Training Strategy, which includes the Staff Review and Development Scheme, provides a comprehensive framework for staff development. Heads of departments and divisions are responsible for ensuring that all staff are reviewed in line with the scheme and their training and development requirements reported to the Staff Development and Training Unit. This Unit, responsible for reporting annually to Academic Committee on staff development activities, receives advice and strategic direction from the Human Resources Policy Committee and relevant subcommittees.

62 UCL recognises that staff appointed to lectureships are normally experienced researchers, and therefore that support during the probationary period, which is fully mentored, particularly emphasises teaching. Responsibility for helping probationers develop their teaching expertise rests with mentors, charged with providing constructive and confidential feedback on the basis of a range of teaching observations. Heads of department are responsible for establishing and monitoring arrangements for induction, integration and support, and for annual progress and performance reviews. The roles and responsibilities of all concerned are clearly and succinctly set out in a handbook.

63 Probationary academic staff with less than three years' teaching experience are required to take the first, and encouraged to take the second,

module of the Higher Education Academy accredited Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education; UCL intends, in the future, to fund the delivery of the entire programme to all new probationary teaching staff. Recently appointed members of academic staff spoke enthusiastically of the support they had received from mentors and heads of department during probation, and confirmed that they had been encouraged to undertake the Certificate.

64 The monitoring of departments' arrangements for peer observation of teaching is part of the IQR procedure. Following a review of current arrangements by a QMEC working group a revised policy statement was implemented from academic year 2004-05. The revised policy requires that an annual statement confirming that observation of all relevant staff has taken place be submitted to departmental, and thence faculty, teaching committees. The audit team confirms that peer observation is widely regarded as a useful exercise.

65 The recently established Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT), within the Education and Information Support Division, provides training, advice and support for staff in the use of learning technologies, and will support an established programme of secondments of academic staff to work on developing and disseminating innovative pedagogical opportunities. Biennial internal conferences on technologies and innovation in learning and teaching, said by UCL to be the largest of their kind in UK higher education, are further indications of UCL's success in encouraging staff in this area of activity.

66 In the view of the audit team, which notes in particular the extension of such training to support staff, the induction, mentoring and development of the teaching skills of new members of staff and the work of the Staff Development and Training Unit and of the CLAT constitute a feature of good practice. The team also encourages UCL in its declared intention of clarifying responsibility for staff development within the committee structure, and making increasingly explicit the key enhancement role of QMEC in particular in this area.

Assurance of the quality of teaching delivered through distributed and distance methods

67 UCL has a distance-learning strategy, and is currently encouraging departments to consider possible technological developments within their own disciplines. At present, however, only a limited number of distance-learning programmes are operational, including an M-level venture in India in collaboration with British Telecom. Such collaborative provision as exists is formally the responsibility of Academic Board. UCL does not franchise its own programmes or validate those of other institutions and, with very limited exceptions, collaborations with other HEIs are restricted to research or student exchange. In the case of the latter, partner institutions are carefully vetted, prepared and monitored, and student participants briefed, inducted and supported.

Learning support resources

68 In the course of the audit visit, and in particular through the DATS, it was confirmed that learning resources, apart from some specific issues relating to teaching space, are generally more than adequate, and in some cases outstanding, with students speaking enthusiastically about their access to renowned library collections and state-of-the-art equipment. In its information strategy UCL identifies computing as a priority, and it is currently enhancing information technology (IT) support and training for staff and students, and integrating technology and pedagogy in the development of new learning and teaching modes. While the provision of computing facilities is limited by space, the student-to-computer ratio is currently 11:1, and a managed desktop has greatly extended and enhanced electronic learning support. UCL claims to have one of the finest research libraries in the country, and its library and museum collections constitute a major learning resource. UCL intends to make further major investments in library and information services, to create an enhanced environment for learning and research, and to develop further its web-based resource for key skills development, to

contribute to the provision of a single developmental portfolio of key skills, from first year undergraduate programmes through taught postgraduate programmes to PhD. Other significant learning resources include an academic communication programme, and a Language Centre providing both foreign and English language teaching and academic skills for international students.

Academic guidance, support and supervision

69 It is central to UCL's mission that all students' learning experience should be informed by cutting-edge research, and both institutional and departmental-level scrutiny confirm that this occurs at undergraduate as well as postgraduate level. The audit team, while noting the recommendation of a recent report on innovations in learning, teaching and assessment to the effect that departmental learning and teaching strategies should be more explicit about the interplay of research and learning and teaching quality, accepts that a mature research ethos underpins all aspects of UCL's academic activities. It must, therefore, be a key obligation of those responsible for academic guidance to ensure that students benefit to the maximum from this.

70 Research students whom the audit team met, in particular in the course of the DATS, were unanimous in their praise for the quality of supervision they received and for the outstanding learning resources available to them; and the team confirms that the general research environment is of a high standard. The team also notes, however, that, while training is offered to new PhD supervisors, it is not yet compulsory; and that although appropriate research skills training is available it remains optional other than for students supported by the research councils.

71 Students seen by the audit team confirmed UCL's statement in its critical self-analysis that induction week is a well-established event. Departmental induction activities are supported by guidelines based on examples of good practice identified by students, including

reminders to make appropriate preparations to welcome students with disabilities and those who miss induction week. The International Office runs an orientation programme for international students, as does the Graduate School for all new graduate students, and the Library and Information Systems make their own induction provisions, all of which students described to the team as successful and well-regarded. The team noted the recognition, in the learning and teaching strategy, that UCL's success in widening participation will in future necessitate a longer induction programme and the development of a support structure for non-traditional students.

72 From the moment of arrival students are provided with a range of academic support, some of it integrated with personal support, designed to optimise their academic performance and, more generally, the quality of their overall experience. Departmental tutors advise on such matters as admissions and choice of course, as well as reporting on progress and attendance; faculty tutors, under the direction of the senior tutor (who is also responsible for liaising with the Registrar's Division on student progress issues), advise on academic regulations and communicate with outside bodies. In the case of graduate students, faculty graduate tutors offer support and exercise general oversight.

73 UCL has well-established and documented procedures for student complaints and representations. These were reviewed in academic year 1999-2000 to ensure compliance with forthcoming legislation, and have been further reviewed subsequently to reflect, inter alia, the establishment of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. UCL takes pains to ensure, in particular through the role of the senior tutor, supported as appropriate by the SU, that students are aware of these developing procedures and appropriately supported in navigating them.

74 In the view of the audit team UCL has a sound system of academic support, designed to facilitate the timely identification of academic problems, and which effectively contributes to the quality of the student experience.

Personal support and guidance

75 UCL operates a well-developed personal tutorial system which supplements student academic support by offering all students, undergraduate and postgraduate, a continuing relationship with a designated member of staff responsible for their general welfare. Personal tutors are guided by the Staff Development and Training Unit's Handbook for Personal Tutors, which contains advice on how to help students in difficulty and how to deal with recurrent student problems, as well as explaining key roles in UCL's student support system and providing a guide to student welfare services.

76 At institutional level the Dean of Students is responsible for the management of the Student Counselling Service, the Careers Service, the Student Health Service and the Student Residential Service. In addition to providing an advisory service to students and advising staff on handling student problems, the Dean chairs the Student Welfare Co-ordinating Committee, which oversees the provision of advisory services to students, receives statistics on student welfare issues and reports annually to Academic Committee. Officers of the SU, who advised the audit team that a good relationship exists between student representatives and senior management generally, spoke especially highly of the Dean of Students' bridging role, and of his partnership with SU representatives on the Student Welfare Co-ordinating Committee. The team concludes that UCL provides a good level of personal as well as academic support to its students, and that the close coordination of tutorial and supervisory support and student advisory and counselling services, in which the Dean of Students plays a key role, is a feature of good practice.

Collaborative provision

77 UCL aims to increase its numbers of on-campus international students, and its International Strategy, directed at advancing its position as a globally prestigious HEI and at maximising income generation from all aspects of international activity, appears to the audit

team to be clear and far-sighted. UCL has been active in relation to the Bologna process: its Pro-Provost (Europe) has been appointed a UK negotiator and its integrated international strategy has been discussed elsewhere (paragraph 30). As indicated above (see paragraph 4), UCL has no overseas franchise or validation agreements and no intention of developing any, aiming, rather, to develop links with high-profile overseas institutions and encourage their students to take its programmes.

Discipline audit trails

Architecture

78 The DAT for architecture covered provision in the Bartlett School of Architecture within the Faculty of the Built Environment, leading to the awards BSc Architecture, BSc Architectural Studies, Diploma in Architecture, MArch Architecture and MArch Architectural Design. The DSED was the self-evaluative statement prepared for the IQR in 2003, updated and accompanied by a commentary; programme specifications for all awards, relevant student data, reports of the most recent Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) visit, external examiners' reports, student work, internal committee minutes and the IQR action plan, which has led to a number of recent changes to the School's structure and working practices.

79 Undergraduate programme specifications make reference to the appropriate subject benchmark and the FHEQ but not to the *Code of practice* published by QAA. Programme specifications are generally limited in scope, and the format in which they are presented gives only limited emphasis to the varying level and aims of the awards. In the view of the audit team the School makes good use of centrally provided progression and completion data, augmented by Faculty-produced information, to monitor quality and standards. The team also notes that the School has been commissioned by RIBA to undertake a further analysis of student data in architecture by ethnicity and gender, with particular regard to applications and later performance.

80 As indicated elsewhere (paragraphs 12 and 36), the absence of an institution-wide annual monitoring process is currently being addressed. School staff claimed that in practice such a system is already largely in place as a result of the annual reporting demands of the professional bodies. For example, the School's Strategy for Learning and Teaching Annual Report 2003-04 highlights a number of action points, including reviewing achievements in learning and teaching on a faculty-wide basis, developing the potential of the School's virtual learning environment as a tool for teaching, learning and assessment, informing staff of institutional-level resources available to support the learning and teaching agenda and introducing further key skills training at all levels.

81 The audit team scrutinised a full set of recent external examiners' reports which are, for the most part, very positive about the quality of work and the standards of awards. Reports are appropriately addressed and institutional procedures meticulously followed, though the team considers it would be desirable to send a direct response to the examiners themselves.

82 Assessed student work yielded evidence of appropriate moderation and helpful feedback based on clear assessment criteria. Students commented favourably on this, for the most part regarding feedback as timely and helpful, and based on clear assessment criteria. The operation of oral and written feedback mechanisms for the formative assessment of design work, which occurs at defined times in the programme, is sound and systematic, and the audit team noted in particular the mechanism by which the needs of students in difficulty are quickly notified to personal tutors, so that support and advice can be given.

83 Students receive a course booklet and student guides by year of study, augmented by supplementary information on course details and design briefs, which collectively provide full information on expectations and support. Students told the audit team that this information meets their needs, especially as it is helpfully augmented by informal contact with staff whom they find approachable and

supportive. Students consider the personal tutorial system, under which every student is allocated a personal tutor and given access to a departmental tutor as necessary, clear and comprehensible. As usual in architecture, the School makes extensive use of part-time professional staff whose contributions both students and other staff view positively.

84 Students are generally positive about the learning resources available to them, in particular workshop facilities and the fact that they can access specialist resources and staff expertise from elsewhere in UCL. Nonetheless, staff and students recognise the inadequacy of the present building for the number of students currently enrolled, studio workspace shortages causing particular difficulties. UCL has responded by earmarking a new building for the School and agreeing a reduced intake target until it becomes available.

85 Students have opportunities to raise issues in several ways. Staff-student committees meet termly, with all staff and students invited. The main discussion areas are reported to relevant course committees; these in turn report to Faculty Teaching Committee. The School acknowledges that the staff-student committee system has been only a qualified success, and has changed the structure from a participative to a representative one. Student feedback is secured through an annual student evaluation questionnaire, processed centrally with results reported to the School. Responses are discussed at all relevant committees, with key matters reported to Faculty Teaching Committee and thence to Academic Committee. Students advised the audit team that their views and suggestions are valued and, wherever possible, acted upon.

86 From a study of samples of assessed work, external examiners' reports and other documentation, and from discussions with students and staff, it is concluded that the standard of student achievement in architecture is appropriate to the levels of the awards and their location within FHEQ.

Chemistry

87 The DAT for chemistry covered provision in the Department of Chemistry, in the Faculty

of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, as follows: single honours MSc and BSc programmes in Chemistry, Chemical Physics, Medicinal Chemistry and Chemistry (International Programme); combined honours MSc and BSc programmes involving Chemistry with a European Language, Mathematics or Management Studies. The DSED, which was clearly presented and informative, was the self-evaluative statement prepared for the IQR in 2002, updated and accompanied by a commentary, the IQR report and action plans, the learning and teaching strategy, accreditation material, student progression data and handbooks.

88 Documentation provided for the audit visit demonstrates that the Department's programmes reflect the appropriate FHEQ descriptors, including those at H and M levels. Programme specifications, provided for all programmes covered by the DAT, conform to the institutional template and have been formally approved, though programme aims, which are not always detailed or especially explicit, do not invariably articulate with those of individual course units, and the specifications' intended audience is always not clear: students whom the audit team met, for example, were unaware of their existence. They invariably refer to the appropriate subject benchmark but not the *Code of practice*, though a review of unit descriptors and other documentation, including external examiners' comments, demonstrates that the *Code* permeates departmental teaching and learning.

89 Though UCL does not as yet require departments to complete annual monitoring reports, the Department is compliant with such requirements as do exist. It also produced a pilot Sessional Report on academic year 2003-04, which deploys a range of performance indicators, demonstrating, in the audit team's view, that thoughtful and critical evaluation of current provision has taken place. Its learning and teaching strategy articulates with the institutional strategy and is applied consistently.

90 Formative assessment is provided primarily by weekly small group tutorials in each of the main branches of chemistry, and in compulsory

workshops at which students are required to produce work for discussion. Formal examinations feature strongly in summative assessment, supplemented by coursework consisting of an appropriate combination of practical and project reports, essays and presentations. Assessed work is carefully marked, with evidence of appropriate moderation or double marking, and of differences between first and second markers being resolved within a defined protocol. Students confirmed that coursework assessment criteria are provided, and constructive written and oral feedback given.

91 External examiners' report forms, which require comment on the compatibility of assessment and FHEQ level descriptors, confirm the appropriateness of the standard of examination papers. Scrutiny of documentation and discussion with staff confirm that the Department takes external examiners' comments seriously, and that their reports are handled in a manner which conforms to institutional procedures. Examination board minutes indicate that each candidate's performance is analysed carefully, with a sensitively devised methodology for considering extenuating circumstances. The Head of Department reports back through the Faculty, and external examiners are advised of responses to their report through this document, which is forwarded to them.

92 Students receive an undergraduate Guide or postgraduate Handbook, supplemented by extensive website and other materials, which, together, provide detailed information about the content and assessment mode of each unit as well as past examination papers and comments from previous cohorts. Detailed information is also provided on departmental and institutional-level pastoral support and how to access it. Students expressed strong satisfaction with the level, nature and accessibility of these forms of information, and are equally enthusiastic about the quality and range of equipment and supporting IT and library provision. Even undergraduates consider they have access to state-of-the-art equipment, and postgraduates advised the audit team that,

if not available in chemistry, necessary apparatus can be accessed by agreement with other departments or local institutions. Overall, students consider the Department very well organised; they understand what is expected of them and what support is available.

93 Student feedback data are obtained annually through questionnaires on all aspects of provision, informal discussion with staff (in particular the departmental tutor) and meetings of the Staff-Student Consultative Committee, which views the responses and prepares a summary for Departmental Teaching Committee for consideration and action. Summary questionnaire outputs and staff responses are also available on notice boards and the departmental website. Departmental Teaching Committee, which contains Consultative Committee representation, is responsible for the quality and standards of degree programmes at departmental level, for overseeing modifications to course units and for departmental strategies, policies and resource allocation. Both students and staff confirm the effectiveness of this structure. Overall, the audit team considers students have ample formal and informal opportunities to express their opinions, and staff take them seriously, acting on them when possible.

94 From a study of samples of assessed work, external examiners' reports and other documentation, and from discussions with students and staff, it is concluded that the standard of student achievement in chemistry is appropriate to the levels of the awards and their location within FHEQ.

English language and literature

95 The DAT for English language and literature covered: BA English Language and Literature; BA English and German; MA and Diploma English Language (Modern); MA English Renaissance to Enlightenment; MA English: Issues in Modern Culture; and the forthcoming MA Medieval Literature; The DSED was the self-evaluative statement prepared for the IQR in 2001, updated and accompanied by a commentary. The learning and teaching strategy, statistical data relating to student entry from academic

years 1999-2000 to 2003-04, the IQR Report, action plan and associated materials, programme specifications and all student handbooks were also made available. The audit team confirms that all programmes are designed in accordance with institutional procedures, and that the procedures are thorough in conception and conscientiously applied.

96 Programme specifications are available for all programmes considered within the DAT, but the audit team considers their content reflects rather than transcends staff reservations as to their pedagogical utility. The audit team saw evidence that some consideration of benchmark statements, the FHEQ and the *Code of practice* has taken place, but believes the Department has yet to exploit the developmental opportunities to be derived from full engagement with external reference points. The Department has sound data on the ethnicity of students, geographical location, progression, graduate destinations and widening participation, and has responded to the latter by seconding a member of staff for a term over the last two years to develop links with state schools.

97 In the absence of an institutional-level annual monitoring procedure the Department reflects annually on its practice through an annual course review meeting, course convenor meetings and staff meetings. In the view of the audit team the enhancement potential of such measures would be significantly increased were an institutional level procedure to be introduced.

98 At the heart of the Department's learning and teaching activities lies the one-to-one tutorial system, the benefits of which labour intensive system were strongly advanced by both staff and students. In the view of the audit team students are well supported by academic staff, learning resources and pastoral care: handbooks appear thorough, and describe expectations and assessment criteria clearly and concisely, while internationally renowned library collections are made available in an appropriate and user-friendly way.

99 In accordance with institutional procedures, feedback on teaching quality is

gathered from undergraduates through the annual student evaluation questionnaire, the results of which the Department addresses transparently and conscientiously; similarly thorough and open procedures exist for collecting and processing postgraduate data, and the audit team saw evidence of student feedback initiating changes in departmental practice. While student questionnaires are well designed, given that they attracted only a 30 per cent response rate in academic year 2003-04, even allowing for the close informal contact between staff and students and the existence of the representative system, this DAT offers further justification for QMEC'S current review of student feedback operations.

100 Postgraduate students employed as adjunct tutors attend a compulsory training session organised by the Departmental Tutor before the start of the academic year, at which teaching and administrative practices are explained and a sample essay marked, a second meeting later in the term and two meetings in the spring term. The audit team, while noting the professionalism with which this procedure is conducted, wonders whether a one-day introductory meeting offers sufficient teaching preparation, and considers a review of the Postgraduate Teaching Assistant Scheme desirable.

101 The audit team scrutinised a range of external examiners' reports, which are almost invariably complimentary about quality and standards, and the handling of which follows institutional procedures. At departmental level the reports are considered by the Chair of Examinations, whose report is circulated to academic staff and considered formally at the autumn Board of Examiners, when appropriate action is taken and external examiners advised of it. The audit team was interested to note the Department's assessment strategy of a tutorial contribution mark contributing 10 per cent to the overall mark, a policy which, students advised the team, they understand and support. More generally, the team's meeting with students confirms the course Handbook's claim that students clearly understand the method by which degrees are calculated.

102 The Department's operation of the peer observation scheme appears conscientious and satisfactory. The self-evaluative statement prepared for the IQR acknowledged that the staff development programme has slipped, but the updated supplement states that it is now almost completely up to date. While welcoming this reassurance the audit team questions whether the institutional mechanism for ensuring that all staff members benefit from staff development according to need is invariably effective, as the record of recent staff participation supplied to the team appears incomplete.

103 From a study of samples of assessed work, external examiners' reports and other documentation, and from discussions with students and staff, it is concluded that the standard of student achievement in English is appropriate to the levels of the awards and their location within FHEQ.

Psychology

104 The DAT for psychology covered the following programmes offered by the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Life Sciences: BSc Psychology; BSc Medical Sciences with Psychology (Intercalated Degree); MPhil/PhD Research Programme; Doctorate in Educational Psychology; Doctorate in Child and Adolescent Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy; MSc Cognitive Neuropsychology (offered jointly with Birkbeck College); MSc Educational Psychology; MSc/Diploma Human-Computer Interaction with Ergonomics (offered jointly with the Department of Computer Science); MSc/Diploma Hypnosis Applied to Medicine; Applied Hypnosis; Hypnosis Applied to Dentistry; MSc/Diploma Psychoanalytic Developmental Psychology; MSc/Diploma Theoretical Psychoanalytic Studies; MSc Research Methods.

105 The DSED was the self-evaluative statement prepared for the IQR in 2003; all programme specifications, student data sets, external examiners' reports, handbooks, student work, internal committee minutes and full documentation relating to the IQR, were also provided. IQR procedures and documentation appeared thorough and supportive of quality enhancement, and the audit team considered the DSED generally helpful.

106 Programme specifications are variable in length, structure and content, ranging from one providing extensive information on aims and content, learning objectives and associated methods of assessment to others which are brief and schematic. The audit team noted that the comment of a QAA subject review of 1999 that the documentation did not closely match skills to specific learning outcomes remains pertinent six years later. Few programme specifications make more than cursory reference to the Academic Infrastructure; one, while making a footnote reference to FHEQ, contains little to indicate progression of intellectual or other skills, makes little attempt to address the benchmark statement in terms of the application of knowledge or of ethical concerns, and makes no reference to the *Code of practice* published by QAA.

107 Nonetheless, the Department uses a variety of assessment methods appropriate to the broad objectives set out in the programme specifications. In the MSc Educational Psychology the link between intended learning outcomes and individual assessment arrangements is clear and explicit, and the Department may wish to consider ways of ensuring that such good practice is identified, emulated and disseminated. In particular it may wish to consider how its best assessment practices can be more closely linked to the Academic Infrastructure.

108 The Department has access to wide-ranging student data provided by UCL, though, while these data are partitioned in various ways, few cross-tabulations have been calculated and the Department may wish to consider how institutionally-generated data can best be used to enhance quality.

109 All programmes and course units are evaluated by student questionnaire, and several examples were given of appropriate responses being made to student feedback. An effective course representative system is in place, and students advised the audit team they consider the system helpful and responsive. Overall, students commented favourably on the accessibility of staff and the positive departmental culture, though they expressed

discontent with one intercalated degree, where some students, required to choose a project before completing relevant core modules, appear relatively disadvantaged, an inequity which they believe translates into lower degree classifications. Though the team did not have the opportunity of investigating these observations further, the Department may wish to revisit this issue, reconsidering both its arrangements for this degree and its handling of student representations.

110 The audit team scrutinised a three-year run of consistently complimentary external examiners' reports and the procedures by which the examination process as a whole is reviewed. It found the latter procedures comprehensive, transparent and effective, and the arrangements for external examining and report management satisfactory.

111 A variety of undergraduate and postgraduate assessed work was examined, and the audit team noted that staff feedback on assessed work competently identifies strengths and areas for improvement. The team noted in particular the practice of electronic submission of work (which facilitates the inclusion of marker comments), the electronic completion of feedback forms and the detection of plagiarism. Course convenors' reports on student achievement, student evaluations and relevant external examiner comments are considered by departmental and faculty committees and meetings, from which a summary report, ultimately for consideration by QMEC, is generated. The team examined a sample of these reports, the data upon which they are based and relevant committee minutes, and considers the procedures thorough, appropriate and responsive.

112 Students expressed strong satisfaction with the resources and the level of personal support provided, and confirmed to the audit team that information about courses and course requirements is clear and accessible. Handbooks for the MSc in Educational Psychology, and in particular the preparatory material for field placements, appear thorough and consistent with institutional models of good practice. With

specialised research laboratories, large teaching spaces for practical classes and a cluster of small booths, the Department is well-resourced in teaching and research accommodation; while students have access to the latest technology and administrative and technical support. The team noted in particular that successive external reviews have judged learning resources excellent.

113 From a study of samples of assessed work, external examiners' reports and other documentation, and from discussions with students and staff, it is concluded that the standard of student achievement in psychology is appropriate to the levels of the awards and their location within FHEQ.

Public policy

114 The DAT for Public Policy covered all taught programmes (all of which are at postgraduate level) provided by the School of Public Policy and the Jill Dando Institute as follows: MSc Public Policy; MSc European Public Policy; MSc International Public Policy; MA Legal and Political Theory; MA Human Rights; MSc Crime Science; Certificate in Crime Prevention and Community Safety. Core teaching on these programmes is provided by the School's staff but programmes also include option modules provided by other departments. All taught programmes have been designed and approved in forms that take account of the FHEQ and relevant benchmark statements. The DSED was the self-evaluative statement prepared for the IQR in 2003. Extensive documentation on programmes and their management was also made available, including all programme specifications and examples of student work.

115 The School deploys three related procedures for the continuing review of the quality of its programmes: Programme Steering Committee, which reviews course and programme analysis reports, external examiners' reports and on-line evaluations by students together with progress and achievement data provided by the institution; boards of examiners, which review and confirm marks and deal with a variety of assessment issues; and the Departmental Teaching Committee, which

reviews programmes and modules, student evaluations and issues drawn to its attention by the Student-Staff Consultative Committee.

116 The School's procedures for monitoring the quality of its programmes and informing and supporting students in their learning and in terms of pastoral care are modelled on those prescribed by the institution. The relative newness of the School (which was set up in 1997 as a focus for research and teaching in politics and public policy) has permitted it to establish formal practices and routines unaffected by longstanding departmental traditions. The information provided to both students and new staff - pre-arrival, on induction and in support of the individual courses - is clear and appears comprehensive. Much of it is also available on the School websites, which provide particularly thorough and helpful teaching, learning and administrative information. The School has also put in place clear strategies, including a learning and teaching strategy and explicit assessment rules, which students find accessible and helpful. Staff avail themselves of UCL's staff development opportunities, and the audit team confirms that the appraisal system is fully operational.

117 Students are substantially involved in programme monitoring. The representative system works well and response rates to module and programme evaluation questionnaires are high. Documentation reviewed by the audit team shows a pattern of responsiveness to student concerns and suggestions, as well as to recommendations emerging from the IQR and the QAA subject review. Changes resulting from these reviews include providing students with earlier guidance on MSc dissertations, appointing a member of academic staff as careers liaison officer, seeking additional ways to provide students with earlier formative feedback on their work and developing an innovative and well-regarded research methods course, taught and assessed on-line using a virtual learning environment created with help and financial support from the institution. Staff who met the team claimed that the School recruits able and

committed postgraduates, with expectations which match their seniority and maturity; areas where the School had been unable to meet these expectations relate largely to resource issues beyond its sphere of influence.

118 On arrival, all taught master's degree students are allocated a tutor from amongst the academic staff, and research students are each assigned two supervisors. Students who met the audit team reported that these systems work well, emphasising that they find staff accessible and helpful, and the office of the Executive Administrator particularly receptive to their approaches.

119 The audit team confirms that the School follows institutional procedures both for examinations and for monitoring and reviewing the examination system. External examiners confirm that standards are appropriately set, and they are often complimentary about the quality of student work. Where external examiners make suggestions there is evidence that they are seriously considered and responses formulated.

120 In the course of the DAT the audit team examined a selection of assessed student work, which demonstrated knowledge and originality appropriate to M level work and reflected significant student engagement with their subjects. The master's programmes reviewed attract able and highly motivated students, almost all of whom progress well academically and move on to employment or further study.

121 From a study of samples of assessed work, external examiners' reports and other documentation, and from discussions with students and staff, it is concluded that the standard of student achievement in public policy is appropriate to the levels of the awards and their location within FHEQ.

The students' experience of published information and other information available to them

122 The critical self-analysis explained that the well-established procedures for students to register complaints and make formal representations were comprehensively reviewed

in academic year 1999-2000 in the light of impending legislation on human rights and freedom of information, and that a further review following the establishment of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator resulted in the introduction of a unified procedure whose operation will be carefully monitored.

123 The provision of information for prospective students is overseen by Educational Liaison which, to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of all information thus available, audits all such materials according to procedures defined in the Academic Manual. The critical self-analysis stated that the well-established policy on providing information to students from registration to completion strongly encourages departments to provide specified forms of information as early as possible. Students seen in the course of the discipline audit trails confirmed that they had been provided with clear and wide-ranging information in handbooks, both as hard copy and on departmental websites.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

124 QMEC has responsibility for overseeing UCL's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure and TQI requirements, including the provision of qualitative and quantitative information required in connection with HEFCE's document 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance*. It was confirmed to the audit team that all data have been loaded, and that UCL is on course to meet its TQI obligations.

Findings

Findings

125 The institutional audit of University College London (UCL), combined with a scrutiny in respect of its application for taught and research degree awarding powers, was undertaken during the period 7 to 10 March and 16 to 17 March 2005. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of UCL's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility as a UK degree-awarding body. As part of the audit process, and reflecting protocols agreed with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Standing Conference of Principals and Universities UK, the audit included consideration of examples of institutional processes at work at the level of courses through discipline audit trails (DATs), together with examples of these processes operating at the level of the institution as a whole. This section of the report summarises the findings of the audit. It concludes by identifying features of good practice that emerged during the audit, and making recommendations to UCL for action to enhance current practice.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

126 UCL operates a pyramidal committee structure for assuring the quality of programmes. Academic Committee, with delegated powers in respect of learning and teaching, academic standards, quality management and enhancement and staff development, stands at the apex of the system, with one of its satellite committees, Quality Management and Enhancement Committee (QMEC), having a range of operational responsibilities, including monitoring the operation of internal quality reviews and overseeing UCL's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure and teaching quality information (TQI).

127 UCL has a longstanding tradition of departmental quasi-autonomy, and increased accountability has met with a variable response at departmental level. Accordingly UCL has created

a firmer line management structure, exemplified in the appointment of executive deans and heads of department, both sets of post holders being accountable to the Provost. While some members of academic departments remain resistant to what UCL termed quality jargon, the institution is moving towards a position in which it has greater oversight of departmental practices and, therefore, in which it will be better able to address matters such as quality enhancement and assuring the comparability and maintenance of the standards of its awards. Hence, for example, as well as moving towards a consistent procedure for annual monitoring, UCL adopted an institutional assessment strategy at the start of academic year 2004-05. While formalising and enforcing delegation within a context and culture privileging departmental freedom over management control has sometimes proved challenging, at no point did audit enquiries identify any areas of practice currently falling below an acceptable quality threshold, and it is concluded that UCL is now increasingly in a position to identify and remedy such a situation should it occur.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards

128 UCL's approach to securing the standards of its awards is based on its procedures for programme approval, quinquennial programme review and its use of external examiners. Arrangements for annual monitoring are currently devolved to departments (with appropriate arrangements in place for combined studies degrees), though UCL is moving towards a position in which the default procedures for annual monitoring will be those currently operating in a specific department, with departures from them requiring formal justification and approval, based on clear evidence that specified minimum requirements will in all cases be met.

129 Proposals for new programmes of study are scrutinised by a specialist subcommittee of Academic Committee, supported by steering groups responsible for programme and course

approval, programme review and the evaluation of external or collaborative programmes. External input into the approval procedure is secured through scrutiny by an external adviser, who is a subject specialist and normally but not necessarily a current external examiner or, where appropriate, a relevant professional body. Internal quality review operates on the basis of detailed guidelines, and also involves external participation. Its approach, designed to be developmental as well as rigorous, appears thorough and professional, and evidence from the DATs, in the course of which increasingly positive staff attitudes to the quality regime were identified, provided confirmation that procedures are scrupulously followed.

130 All assessed work leading to an award is subject to the scrutiny of an external examiner, whose role is to ensure that the standard of the programme in question is appropriate for the award of that programme, and consistent both with equivalent awards in other higher education institutions in the UK and with relevant parts of the Academic Infrastructure. External examiners scrutinise all examination papers and see a representative example of scripts, moderating internal marking but not acting as auxiliary markers. The attendance at examination boards of one examiner external to the University of London is mandatory. External examiners' reports are scrutinised, and addressed at the institutional level appropriate to the nature of the issues raised, with departmental responses normally, though not necessarily, forwarded to the examiners concerned. Evidence from the DATs confirms meticulous departmental engagement with external examiners, and that reports are addressed conscientiously and professionally. These arrangements, while satisfactory, would be enhanced were UCL to ensure the routine and timely provision of information to external examiners as to responsive action taken, and such an innovation is considered desirable.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for supporting learning

131 UCL's learning and teaching strategy takes an integrated approach to supporting and developing managerial, academic and support staff. Probationary academic staff with less than three years' teaching experience are required to take the first part of the Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. UCL promotes equal career routes and rewards for teaching and research-led promotion applications, and a mandatory system of peer observation of teaching is in place. The recently established and highly innovative Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT) supports staff in using and developing learning technologies. While it is considered desirable for UCL to review its decade-old postgraduate teaching assistant scheme specifically, and to monitor more closely the use of part-time and hourly paid staff, overall the induction and development of the teaching skills of new members of staff, and the work of the Staff Development and Training Unit and of the Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, constitute a feature of good practice.

132 In terms of physical learning resources, UCL is enhancing information technology support and training for staff and students, and integrating technology and pedagogy in the development of new modes of learning and teaching. Overall, with the exception of some specific issues relating to teaching space, physical learning resources are more than adequate and in some cases outstanding, with students speaking enthusiastically about their access to internationally renowned library collections and state-of-the-art equipment.

133 Departmental induction activities for new students are carefully planned on the basis of a central framework, inclusive in scope and well regarded. Students receive a package of academic and personal support provided by an integrated tutorial system, structured around the pivotal post of Dean of Students but extending down to personal tutors, whose work is guided by a Handbook produced by the Staff Development and Training Unit. UCL is

considered to have a very sound system of academic support, which facilitates the timely identification of academic problems and enhances the quality of the student experience. The close coordination of tutorial and supervisory support and student advisory and counselling services in particular, in which the Dean of Students plays a pivotal role, is deemed a feature of good practice.

Outcomes of discipline audit trails

Architecture

134 The Bartlett School of Architecture conscientiously uses student data to monitor quality and standards. It elicits and addresses student feedback through the institutional questionnaire system, and has responded responsibly to acknowledged limitations in representation procedures. Annual monitoring of provision is thorough, mainly because of professional body requirements. External examiners' reports are seriously addressed, though examiners are not routinely informed of responsive action. Assessed work receives helpful feedback based on clear criteria; mechanisms for formative assessment of design work are sound, and students, who are well-informed about procedures and expectations, are content with the information received. Learning resources are generally satisfactory, and the acknowledged inadequacy of present accommodation has been appropriately addressed pending the availability of a new building.

135 From the study of the range of materials made available, including samples of assessed work, external examiners' reports and professional body accreditation reports, and from discussions with students and staff, the standard of student achievement in architecture is considered appropriate to the levels of the awards and their location within *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

Chemistry

136 Programmes in the Department of Chemistry reflect the appropriate FHEQ descriptors and take cognisance of all aspects of the academic framework, sometimes implicitly.

Programme specifications do not invariably do justice to the quality of educational provision, which is rated highly by both students and external examiners. The Department undertakes thoughtful and critical evaluation of its teaching, and has a clear learning and teaching strategy. Assessed work is carefully marked; coursework assessment criteria are provided and constructive feedback given; external examiners are fully and appropriately involved; examination boards function appropriately and professionally. Students receive comprehensive information and speak highly of the range of learning and other supports available to them, and of the Department's flexibility and responsiveness.

137 From the study of the range of materials made available, including samples of assessed work and external examiners' reports, and from discussions with students and staff, the standard of student achievement in Chemistry is considered appropriate to the levels of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

English language and literature

138 The distinctiveness of the high-quality programmes offered by the Department of English Language and Literature derives in part from the one-to-one tutorial system, the educational integrity of which was strongly defended by both staff and students. The Department engages as necessary with the Academic Infrastructure, and shows enthusiasm for UCL's widening participation agenda, to which it has committed staffing resources. The Department follows institutional procedures in areas including student feedback, information, peer observation and examining. There has been slippage in respect of staff development, and there is uncertainty as to the adequacy of the preparation of postgraduate students with teaching responsibilities, a matter which it is considered desirable for UCL to address.

139 From the study of the range of materials made available, including samples of assessed work and external examiners' reports, and from discussions with students and staff, the standard of student achievement in English language and literature is considered appropriate to the levels of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

Psychology

140 Programmes of study in the Department of Psychology are of consistently high quality, skilfully taught and appropriately assessed. Nevertheless, the Department does not engage actively with the Academic Infrastructure, and the monitoring of programme specifications in particular appears ineffective, leading to the loss of educational and communicational opportunities. Students are complimentary about the availability of teaching staff, the information made available to them and the willingness of staff to listen and, where possible, respond to issues they raise. The Department has developed a number of especially innovative practices, including the electronic submission of work, (facilitating the inclusion of marker comments), the electronic completion of feedback forms and plagiarism detection.

141 From the study of the range of materials made available, including samples of assessed work, external examiners' reports and professional body accreditation reports, and from discussions with students and staff, the standard of student achievement in psychology is considered appropriate to the levels of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

Public policy

142 The School of Public Policy was set up in 1997 as a focus for research and teaching in politics and public policy, and has, since 2001, included the Jill Dando Institute for Crime Science. Its postgraduate programmes are delivered in a student-friendly environment reflective of the relative maturity of most students. The knowledge and originality characterising the assessed work are appropriate to M level output. The School takes its annual monitoring responsibilities seriously, it engages with the Academic Infrastructure and adheres to institutional policies in all areas covered by the DAT. Students express strong satisfaction with the teaching and support they receive, participating actively in the School's deliberative and monitoring procedures.

143 From the study of the range of materials made available, including samples of assessed work and external examiners' reports, and from

discussions with students and staff, the standard of student achievement in public policy is considered appropriate to the levels of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

The institution's use of the Academic Infrastructure

144 Responsibility for UCL's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure rests with QMEC, the duties of whose officers include mapping the *Code of practice for the assurance of quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA, onto institutional procedures, and reporting on any action necessary in the light of the precepts. At the time of the audit visit such work was under way on the revised *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, also published by QAA.

145 UCL describes its relationship with the Academic Infrastructure as one of informed and thoughtful engagement, involving a justification of any practice found to be at odds with the precepts. Relevant subject benchmark statements are addressed in all documentation for programme approval and review, with departments required to confirm that engagement has occurred. All programme provision has been mapped against the grade descriptors in the FHEQ. Work on programme specifications is continuing, and a more systematised approach to annual monitoring will facilitate their regular review and development, since in some parts of UCL their potential pedagogic utility has yet to be fully appreciated.

146 UCL has given full attention to the requirements of the FHEQ in relation to the levels of its programmes, ensures that subject benchmark statements are fully addressed and that institutional policies and procedures engage fully with the evolving *Code of practice*. It has fully implemented the management frameworks issued by the relevant research councils, though the councils' training requirements are not mandatory for non-research council funded research students.

The institution's intentions for the enhancement of quality

147 UCL's draft revised learning and teaching strategy addresses the goals of quality enhancement and the strategy by which it intends to meet them. It perceives enhancement as achieved through responses to annual monitoring of programmes and courses, quinquennial review and internal quality review, and through course and programme initiatives, the peer observation of teaching, career development through staff development and institution-wide critical debate.

148 Internal quality review, at the heart of UCL's academic quality operations, has increasingly moved from a compliance-driven to a developmental modality. An adaptation of the system has been applied also to service departments as a means of enhancing the quality of the experience of service users - staff as well as students.

149 UCL has achieved significant enhancement in the field of equal opportunities, its equality policy and action plan addressing employment, teaching and learning, and student support, and requiring each department, each of which has an equal opportunities liaison officer, to develop initiatives with measurable outcomes. A number of UCL's aspirational workforce equality targets are close to being achieved, and its strategic approach to implementing its equality action plan constitutes a feature of good practice.

150 Nonetheless, in spite of UCL's approach to enhancement in its learning and teaching strategy and the strength of its staff development policy and practice, it does not, as yet, have a mature and developed enhancement agenda. While UCL has made progress towards creating structures within which enhancement can occur, and while the DATs provide evidence that very high quality educational practices exist, it has some way to go before data deriving from these practices can be said to constitute a basis for the assured enhancement of the student experience.

The reliability of information

151 The provision of information for prospective students is centrally overseen, and audited on the basis of clearly defined procedures designed to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of all information thus available. Students confirmed that they have been provided with clear and wide-ranging information in handbooks, both as hard copy and on departmental websites.

152 QMEC is responsible for overseeing UCL's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure and TQI requirements, including the provision of qualitative and quantitative information required in connection with HEFCE's document 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance*. It is confirmed that all data have been loaded and that UCL is on course to meet its TQI obligations.

Features of good practice

153 Of the features of good practice noted in the course of the audit, the audit team identified the following in particular:

- i the integrated international strategy, with wide-ranging implications for the composition of the student body, the nature of the curriculum and the way in which it is delivered and the development of strategic international partnerships, as indicative of UCL's ability to effect strategic change (paragraphs 30 and 31)
- ii UCL's innovative and considered approach to developing, and its strategic approach to implementing its equality action plan (paragraph 32)
- iii the induction, mentoring and development of the teaching skills of new members of staff and the work of the Staff Development and Training Unit, and of the Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (paragraphs 61-66)
- iv the close coordination of tutorial and supervisory support and student advisory and counselling services, in which the Dean of Students plays a key role (paragraph 76).

Recommendations for action

154 UCL may wish to consider the advisability of:

- i completing the regularisation of annual monitoring as expeditiously as possible, ensuring that it is implemented in a systematic and consistent way, and that procedures are in place to identify and act upon any consistent themes which emerge (paragraph 36).

155 UCL may wish to consider the desirability of:

- i complementing its intention of reviewing the quality and accuracy of programme specifications by a programme designed to identify best practice and convince departmental level academic staff of programme specifications' potential to enhance the student learning experience (paragraphs 21 and 44)
- ii ensuring that in future all external examiners are advised in a timely manner of the formal response made to their reports (paragraph 42)
- iii ensuring that its student representative system and feedback systems operate effectively throughout the institution (paragraphs 49-51, 82)
- iv taking optimal advantage of the strategic benefits in information management and communication afforded by its new records system (paragraph 56)
- v reviewing the Postgraduate Teaching Assistant Scheme and monitoring more closely the use of part-time and hourly paid staff, in order to identify and disseminate good practice in training and mentoring (paragraphs 60 and 100).

Appendix

University College London's (UCL) statement on developments since the audit visit

Actions taken or proposed to address the recommendations of the audit team

- 1 (Report reference - paragraph 154i) As indicated in our critical self-analysis (submitted to the QAA in November 2004) and other documentation made available to the audit team for their visit, UCL plans to introduce a regularised system of annual monitoring reports by academic departments during the academic year 2005-06.
- 2 (Report reference - paragraph 155i) We understand that the QAA is reviewing its guidelines on programme specifications and clarifying their purpose - in the face of evidence of a lack of shared understanding across the higher education sector as to whether programme specifications should be regarded (i) as a source of information to students/prospective students or (ii) as an internal planning tool for institutions. Once the QAA has clarified these matters, our Quality Management and Enhancement Committee (QMEC) will review UCL's approach to the development and use made of programme specifications.
- 3 (Report reference - paragraph 155ii) UCL will consider whether there is scope for further enhancing our processes for communicating with external examiners on responses made to their reports.
- 4 (Report reference - paragraph 155iii) As indicated in our critical self-analysis (November 2004), QMEC set up during the academic year 2004-05 a working group to review student feedback issues generally. UCL had thus recognised, well before the audit team's visit, the desirability of reviewing the operation of our staff-student committees and other student feedback mechanisms. We welcome the audit team's endorsement of our approach. The working group will report before the end of 2005.
- 5 (Report reference - paragraph 155iv) As was made clear to the audit team during their visit and in our response to their draft report, UCL is determined to take 'optimal advantage of the strategic benefits in information management and communication' afforded by the introduction of a new student record system. We welcome the audit team's endorsement of our view on this matter.
- 6 (Report reference - paragraph 155v) UCL will consider the desirability of reviewing arrangements in relation to postgraduate teaching assistants and part-time and hourly paid staff in order to identify and disseminate good practice in training and mentoring.

Other developments - for information

- 7 (Report reference - paragraph 14) Two additional Pro-Provosts - with responsibilities for (i) India and the Middle East and (ii) North America and both reporting to the Vice-Provost (Academic and International) - were appointed with effect from July 2005.
- 8 (Report reference - paragraphs 142 and 143): A Department of Political Science was established at UCL with effect from August 2005, based on the existing group of political scientists in the School of Public Policy. An external appointment is being made with effect from October 2005 to the Chair of Political Science and headship of the new department. With the creation of this department, the School of Public Policy is no longer formally an academic department but will continue to operate as a focus for the dissemination of knowledge on public policy, based on high-quality academic research across a wide range of UCL's academic departments.

