

University College Winchester

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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 Winchester (the University College) from 23 to 25 May 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 that the University College offers.

To arrive at its conclusions the audit team spoke to members of staff throughout the University College, to current students, and read a wide range of documents relating to the way the University College 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 academic award (for example, a degree). It should be at a similar level across the UK.

Academic quality is a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their award. 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 the University College is that:

- broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the University College's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and that there can be broad confidence in the University College's institutional-level capacity to manage effectively the security of its awards.

Features of good practice

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

- the articulation of the University College's strategic direction and its management of change
- the work of the Research and Knowledge Transfer Centre, especially in its support for postgraduate research students and in the enhancement of a postgraduate research culture
- the development of the role of Learning and Teaching Co-ordinators and their effective integration into University College processes for the enhancement of quality
- the accessibility and supportiveness of staff in their pastoral and academic relations with students, including those in the part-time mode and
- the role of Senior Students in induction and in enhancing the resident student experience.

Recommendations for action

The audit team also recommends that the University College 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 the University College to:

- give priority to ensuring that its data processes are fit for purpose, appropriately targeted and consistently used both centrally and across the Schools to support its learning and teaching strategy and
- develop such guidance on the peer observation of teaching as will ensure that a shared and clearly understood system is put in place which is designed to secure further the quality of the learning experience.

It would be desirable for the University College to:

- ensure greater engagement, at programme level, with *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) in order to assist staff in the setting and monitoring of standards
- ensure that the University College has effective systems in place to assure the quality and standards of its collaborative and its off-site provision during a period of substantial planned expansion
- consider strategies to increase the validity and reliability of feedback from students to the institution.

documents 02/15, *Information on quality and standards in higher education*, and 03/51, *Final guidance*. At the time of the audit, the University College was alert to the requirements set out in HEFCE and to the implications of HEFCE 03/51, and was moving in an appropriate manner to fulfil its responsibilities in this respect.

Outcomes of discipline audit trails

Drama/drama studies, education studies and psychology

The standard of student achievement in the programmes audited is appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ, published by QAA. The quality of learning opportunities available to students is suitable for the programmes of study leading to the awards.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings the audit team also investigated the use made by the University College 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 to define both good practice and academic standards. The findings of the audit suggest that the University College has responded appropriately at institutional level to the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements, programme specifications and the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA.

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 (HEFCE)

Main report

Main report

1 An institutional audit of the University College Winchester (the University College) was undertaken during the week commencing 23 May 2005. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the University College's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility for its awards.

2 The audit was carried out using a process developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in partnership with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) and Universities UK (UUK), and has been endorsed by the Department for Education and Skills. For institutions in England, it replaces the previous processes of continuation audit, undertaken by QAA at the request of UUK and SCOP, and universal subject review, undertaken by QAA on behalf of HEFCE, as part of the latter's statutory responsibility for assessing the quality of education that it funds.

3 The audit checked the effectiveness of the University College's procedures for establishing and maintaining the standards of its academic awards; for reviewing and enhancing the quality of the programmes of study leading to those awards and for publishing reliable information. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with HEFCE, SCOP and UUK, the audit included consideration of an example of institutional processes at work at the level of the programme, through discipline audit trails (DATs), together with examples of those processes operating at the level of the institution as a whole. The scope of the audit encompassed all of the University College's provision and collaborative arrangements leading to its awards.

Section 1: Introduction: University College Winchester

The institution and its mission

4 The University College was founded in 1840 as an Anglican training college and has occupied its present site in Winchester since

1860. The original Church foundation provision had education as its focus, particularly for those whose access to education was limited; a feature which continues to the present day and the University College continues to regard the values underpinning its Christian foundation as significant for its mission. The University College became known as King Alfred's College in 1928, and in 2004 its name was changed to University College Winchester. At the time of the audit, the University College was being considered for university title.

5 The University College is principally located on a single site on the outskirts of the city of Winchester. However, as part of its regional strategy, in September 2003 it opened its Chute House campus, located in Basingstoke, where the provision includes a range of Foundation Degrees (FDs), a top-up degree, a master's programme and a number of post-experience and professional programmes. During 2004-05, 146 students were recorded as registered at Chute House.

6 The University College has a long tradition of teacher education courses and during the last 30 years the range of degree provision has broadened considerably to now offer various degree programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, principally in the fields of education, arts and humanities and the social sciences. Until 1992 the University College's programmes were validated by the Council for National Academic Awards; since 1992 validation has been undertaken by the University of Southampton.

7 In 2003 the University College was granted taught degree-awarding powers and is currently running out its formal accreditation agreement with the University of Southampton. It is planned that from the beginning of the academic year 2005-06 all students admitted, apart from postgraduate research students, will be registered on University College Winchester awards. The University of Southampton will continue to validate the University College's research degrees although the University College is considering making an application for research degree-awarding powers at some point before 2008.

8 At the time of the audit, the University College had in the region of 5,700 students registered on undergraduate and postgraduate awards in both full and part-time modes; of these approximately 3,350 were full-time students and 2,350 part-time. In total, approximately 4,300 students were registered on undergraduate awards, and the remainder on postgraduate awards, including research degrees. The draft Strategic Plan 2005-06 to 2010-11 provides a range of strategic growth targets and notably includes an intention to secure an overall increase in both part-time and mature students of 25 per cent by the end of the planning period, and to achieve an annual growth rate of FD students of 20 per cent per annum.

9 The current academic structure comprises four schools: Community and Performing Arts; Cultural Studies; Education; and Social Sciences. However, at the time of the audit, consideration was being given to the replacement of the school structure with three faculties which would result from the merger of the current School of Community and Performing Arts and the School of Cultural Studies.

10 The University College has a strong commitment to widening participation and has taken the lead in organising the AimHigher initiative for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The University College has provided both the Chair and the Director of the initiative and administers funds of £1.8 million during 2004-05.

11 The University College has recently been successful in its bids for additional student numbers, the latest being an additional 200 full-time equivalent (FTE) students for FD places, which it had achieved through the Hampshire Higher Education Consortium, a HEFCE-approved funding consortium established in 2002-03. In addition to the University College the consortium comprises further education (FE) college partners. It is planned that recruitment to FDs based in the partner colleges will begin in 2005-06.

12 A common theme throughout its development during the period since 1996 has been commitment to the growth and

diversification of the University College and to its engagement with its community and region while, at the same time, retaining a commitment to a 'coherent learning environment'. Further details are provided in paragraphs 46, 143 and 149-151.

13 The University College's mission statement as expressed in its 2005-06 to 2010-11 draft Strategic Plan is: 'To educate, to advance knowledge and to serve the public good.'

Collaborative provision

14 The University College has relatively recently started to extend its collaborative approaches to course development and delivery. At the time of the audit the University College had no international partnerships but had links with five local FE colleges with which collaborative arrangements had been approved in connection with specific programmes. Collaborative provision is addressed within the audit and is considered in paragraphs 143 to 152. At the time of the audit a total of 42 students were registered on two different awards at two partner colleges.

Background information

15 The published information available in advance of, and during the audit included:

- an institutional self-evaluation document (SED)
- a students' written submission (SWS)
- discipline self-evaluation documents (DSEDs) relating to the three subject areas selected for DATs
- QAA reports of the subject reviews for the five years prior to the audit and
- QAA institutional audit report of the University of Southampton in 2003.

16 An appendix to the SED included a CD-ROM containing a comprehensive range of University College policy and strategy documents along with documents relating to its regulatory framework.

17 Following the audit briefing meeting, the University College helpfully made available a range of supplementary documentation to the audit team. The team is grateful to the University College for the attention devoted to ensuring that the information required to carry out its enquiries was made readily available.

The audit process

18 A preliminary meeting was held between the QAA Assistant Director and senior members of the University College on 28 September 2004 to consider the nature and scope of the audit. Following receipt of the University College SED in January 2005, QAA confirmed that three DATs in the areas of drama and drama studies, education studies and psychology would be conducted during the audit visit. The DSEDs relating to the DATs were received by the audit team in late March 2005.

19 The audit team visited the University College from 13 to 15 April 2005 for a briefing meeting. Its purpose was to explore and clarify with the Principal, senior members of staff and student representatives matters of institutional-level management relating to quality and standards raised as a result of preliminary reading of the materials provided by the University College and in the SWS. At the end of the briefing visit the team agreed an outline programme of meetings for the audit visit. It was confirmed that there would be no thematic enquiries conducted during the audit.

20 The students of the University College Students' Union (SU) responded constructively to the invitation to submit a SWS expressing views on various aspects of the student experience at the University College and identifying any matters of concern or commendation in relation to the quality of programmes and the standards of awards. They were also invited to give their views on the level of representation afforded to them and the extent to which their views were taken into account. In January 2005 a SWS was submitted to QAA by SU officers on behalf of the University College's students.

21 The students confirmed that the contents of the SWS had been shared with the University College, and that there were no matters in the document that would require the audit team to treat it with any level of confidentiality greater than that normally applying to the audit process.

22 To carry out the research for the SWS, the SU enlisted the help of a market research company. Their reasons for this were to ensure the professional and impartial collection of data and to meet a tight deadline. In total, 24 students drawn from each of the four Schools were interviewed, comprising a mixture of home and international students, mature and traditional entry students, and male and female students. One of the 24 students was studying part-time. Additionally, a questionnaire resulted in 51 responses.

23 At the conclusion of the briefing meeting, a programme of meetings was arranged to enable the audit team to discuss various aspects of quality and standards with teaching staff, support staff, committee representatives, students and senior staff. The programme also included time for consideration, through the DATs, of ways in which the University College's approach to matters of quality and standards was operating at the level of the subject disciplines.

24 The audit visit took place from 23 to 27 May 2005 and included further meetings with staff and students from the University College, both at central level and in relation to the DATs. The audit team comprised Professor G Elliott, Professor E Evans, Mr P Griffiths and Mrs K Powell-Williams, auditors, and Ms N Evans, audit secretary. The audit was coordinated for QAA by Ms F Crozier, Assistant Director, Development and Enhancement Group.

Developments since the previous academic quality audit

25 In 1996, the University College, which at the time was known as King Alfred's College, was the subject of a Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) audit. The report of this audit commended a number of areas of the College's activity which included the knowledge and

understanding among staff of the College's formal quality assurance systems, the balance between informal and formal quality assurance arrangements, the wide engagement of staff in the national debate on standards, the active involvement of students in the preparation of the College Charter, detailed and helpful validation and review guidelines, the integration of student services and the development of a coherent strategy for undergraduate study.

26 Additionally, the report identified five advisable and three desirable recommendations. The advisable recommendations included monitoring the effectiveness of sharing good practice; ensuring timely feedback on and return of students' work; monitoring the consistent and equitable application of the assessment process; ensuring that information contained in the accreditation reports of the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) is appropriately considered and communicated; and ensuring that the analysis of feedback questionnaire material is useful.

27 Desirable recommendations included monitoring the operation of student services to ensure its continuing success; making training in teaching more systematically available to new appointees and reviewing the appropriateness of the biennial appraisal in relation to two-year contracts.

28 Overall, the audit team formed the view that the University College had made progress in addressing the recommendations contained in the 1996 report. More specifically, it noted that a Student Charter, designed to provide details of the timing of assessment feedback, had been implemented along with the use of a student satisfaction survey to provide the University College with institution-wide student feedback on aspects of provision. Additionally, a new set of academic regulations has been adopted, designed to achieve consistency of the assessment structures over each programme, and initiatives had resulted in staff development being more widely embedded across the University College.

29 The audit team noted two major institutional changes among the various developments which had occurred since the last audit: the granting of powers to award taught degrees and restructuring which had resulted in the reduction of six schools to four. Additionally, a common Academic Framework had been developed which brings together all of the University College's undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, including what was previously a separate modular programme; and strengthening and embedding the quality assurance processes at School level.

30 Since the 1996 audit, QAA had undertaken nine subject reviews at the University College, the most recent of which were conducted during 2001 in the areas of business and management, education, theology and religious studies and archaeology. Responses to these reviews were appropriate and in line with wider University College policies as they had developed since the HEQC audit in 1996.

31 In September 2003, the University College opened its Chute House campus (see paragraph 5). In May 2005 an evaluation had been undertaken of the provision and facilities at the Chute House campus, the findings of which, at the time of the audit, were still to be formally considered by the Regional Programmes Group (RPC) and the Student Affairs and Customer Care Committee (SACC). The evaluation report provided a comprehensive survey of issues from the student perspective. The audit team encourages the University College to respond to the findings of the evaluation, in particular ensuring that recommended reading is fully available, that the virtual learning environment (VLE) is easily accessible, and generally that the Chute House campus students feel part of the wider University College community. This will be particularly important in light of the growth in student numbers planned for the campus (see paragraph 110).

Section 2: The audit investigations: institutional processes

The institution's view as expressed in the SED

32 The SED stated that its approach to the assurance of quality and standards is underpinned by four key principles: the best possible experience for students; the ownership of quality processes by all members of the University College; critical self-evaluation; and openness to external involvement and scrutiny. It also believes that ownership of its processes should extend to its students. Therefore, it seeks to involve them in quality matters wherever possible. The University College believes that it has developed a framework of policies and a system of committees, responsibilities, benchmarking and externality which enables it to have justified confidence in its ability to monitor and assure the standards of its awards. This student-centred philosophy is also articulated in the University College's Learning and Teaching Strategy, whose core is indicated to be the nature of the student experience, enriched through the support of ongoing excellence in learning and teaching and through sustained development of good practice and innovation.

33 Maintenance of academic standards and quality is achieved by systematic annual monitoring of programmes. The SED indicated that this is at the heart of institutional quality assurance. The University College's Learning and Teaching Strategy requires annual monitoring reports to comment on learning and teaching strategies against University College principles and actions. It also requires programme teams to take account of relevant external requirements, including subject benchmarks, and the expectations of employers and relevant external agencies. Definitive course documents, produced for purposes of validation and review, should take account of these requirements.

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

University College strategic management

34 The University College states that it assures its standards and quality by the design and validation of its programmes. Its approach to the assurance of quality and standards is underpinned by the four key principles outlined above in paragraph 32. It also seeks to involve student members of the University College in quality processes wherever possible. The central elements of quality assurance procedures are stated to be: programme validation; annual monitoring of quality and standards; and programme revalidation through periodic review.

35 The University College Board of Governors is responsible for determining the educational character and mission of the University College and for oversight of its activities. The University College's deliberative structures originate in its Academic Board which is responsible, inter alia, for general issues relating to the research, scholarship, teaching and courses at the University College, including policies and procedures for assessment and examination of the academic performance of students, the content of the curriculum, academic standards and the validation and review of courses. The Academic Board makes an annual statement to the Board of Governors covering the main activities of the University College. In practice, Academic Board delegates the operational oversight of matters relating to academic standards, research and knowledge transfer and learning and teaching to three of its subcommittees, the Academic Standards Committee (ASC), the Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee (R&KTC) and the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC). The ASC is responsible for the validation and revalidation and for the monitoring and maintenance of academic standards for all programmes, including those offered in partnership with FE colleges. It also advises the Academic Board on quality and standards both in the University College and within the national context.

36 The current Strategic Plan states that the University College offers a supportive, collegial learning community. The University College aims to ensure that all its courses reflect a philosophy and vision of education which is coherent, sustained and genuinely distinctive. The University College has been through a period of rapid expansion and it plans significant further developments. The audit team examined the process by which a new Strategic Plan had been developed for the University College. This Plan presents the University College as an outward facing and permeable organisation, welcoming outside influences and engaging with society locally, nationally and internationally, placing emphasis on its strong reputation for the generation and transfer of knowledge and for the employability of students, especially from those currently under-represented in higher education (HE).

37 The audit team concluded that the University College had developed clear, carefully articulated and transparent processes for managing strategic change. In respect of the new Strategic Plan, these involved widespread consultation of Governors, staff and students with encouragement for all parties to discuss and provide input. Similarly transparent processes have been involved in the proposals, ongoing at the time of audit, to replace the four-School structure with one based on three Faculties. On the basis of the evidence of how the University College had managed its development over the past few years, the team had confidence in the articulation of the University College's strategic direction and in its management of change.

The University College's management and committee structure

38 The framework for quality management is based on an executive, the Common Management Group (CMG), which comprises the Principal, the Vice-Principal (Academic), the Vice-Principal (Administration), the Dean of Programmes and Quality, the Director of Finance and Planning and the four Heads of School. Within this Group, overall operative responsibility for academic matters related to quality and standards is vested in the Vice-

Principal (Academic), who is responsible to the Principal for the systems and procedures in the University College, while a newly-appointed Dean of Programmes and Quality takes the lead on internal and external quality assurance issues.

39 The Quality Support Office (QSO) is a dedicated unit operating within the Registry which provides administrative support for the ASC. It comprises an Assistant Registrar and two Administrative Officers.

40 In meetings, the audit team learned that the Vice-Principal (Academic) adopted a primarily managerial and developmental role in quality management, whereas the Dean's role is more strategic and process-orientated. While the team acknowledged that these two officers worked harmoniously together within a common managerial framework, it notes that the respective roles were still evolving at the time of audit. The University College will wish to ensure that respective lines of responsibility are clarified for the benefit of colleagues involved at a lower level in the management of its quality and standards.

41 The University College's R&KTC is charged with producing, developing and monitoring research and knowledge-transfer activity within the University College. The LTC develops and monitors its learning, teaching and assessment policy, develops and monitors strategies for its implementation, fosters innovation in learning and teaching and monitors dissemination strategies. It is also charged with producing advice on how to maintain and enhance quality.

42 LTC liaises closely with the ASC and their Chairs meet on an informal basis at least monthly. Each School has a Learning and Teaching Coordinator who sits on the LTC. The work of postgraduate students is supported at School level by the R&KT Coordinator who likewise sits on the R&KTC. In meetings with both staff and students, the audit team learned both of the effective support offered to postgraduate research students during a period when the University College is seeking to expand its postgraduate provision and also of the extent to which the work of the Research

and Knowledge Transfer Centre is appreciated as a strong, supportive and well-focused facility.

43 Each of the University College's Schools has a Quality Committee (SQC) charged with implementing University College processes of assurance, monitoring and evaluation of standards of academic provision. It is a key responsibility of these Committees to compile Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs). These reports consider a range of internal and external evidence, including student feedback and external examiner reports. The reports are considered by the ASC. It is University College policy to devolve more responsibility for quality and standards to the Schools and a Chair responsible for quality is appointed in each School. Quality Chairs are members of the ASC.

44 The University College believes that consistency and transparency in quality and standards are maintained through a system of cross-school membership of quality committees, validation panels and within the annual monitoring process.

45 The audit team found the University College's framework for managing quality and standards to be fit for purpose. Effective liaison at different levels is an important element in its quality strategy and the team endorses the view of the Chair of ASC that, given the nature of University College's devolved structure for quality assurance, regular meetings of chairs of SQCs and of School Examination Boards are essential in order to facilitate dissemination of good practice.

46 The University College intends to play a constructive part in the development of HE in the region. Collaborative activity is a recent development for the University College and it plans a measured growth over the next five years. The University College sees an increasing role for collaborative provision as part of its overall plan to develop partnerships with other HE and FE institutions, including the Hampshire Higher Education Consortium. It aims to use the Lifelong Learning Network to foster progression through post-16 provision in partner colleges and at least to double its strategic alliances with FE college partners.

47 Through its study of documentation and in meetings, the audit team confirmed that collaborative activity is currently restricted to two programmes - the BSc in Horticulture with Sparsholt College and the Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) in English at Bournemouth and Poole College of FE. The team confirmed that current quality assurance arrangements were adequate in respect of existing collaborative provision and that programme approval processes are in line with the relevant section of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA. Because of the scale of the planned expansion scheduled to begin from the autumn of 2005, the University College will wish to review its processes to ensure that it has effective systems in place to assure quality and standards during this period.

The institution's intentions for the enhancement of quality and standards

48 The SED stated that the LTC and the ASC share responsibility for the enhancement of quality and standards. The University College believes that opportunities for enhancement are provided by means of the ongoing evolution of quality assurance processes and by the development of specific institutional or local initiatives.

49 The University College states that its Learning and Teaching Strategy puts enhancement at its heart. It aims to enrich the student experience through the ongoing development of excellence in teaching and learning. Its current strategy aims to improve on previous practice through clearer articulation with the Strategic Plan and with other University College policies, such as those relating to research and knowledge transfer. The University College has recently developed new guidance for work-based learning and is currently developing Personal Development Profiles.

50 The LTC has promoted enhancement by funding a number of projects. It has recently sought to increase the profile of learning and teaching by creating a number of Learning and Teaching Fellowships available to staff who wish

to develop innovative projects. In meetings, the audit team learned that 14 awards had been made in the previous two years and that measures were in place to ensure that the findings of development work were presented and disseminated at staff development days. It is also a requirement for a Learning and Teaching Fellow to place a report of research outcomes on the Learning and Teaching website.

Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

51 The University College's processes for approval, monitoring and review are articulated in its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. This describes the process of validation and gives guidance on designing a programme of study.

52 Programmes proposed for validation, and the documentation produced in support of a proposal, must first receive the approval of the relevant SQC. Any observations made by SQC are submitted to the University College's QSO which transmits them for the guidance of the validation panel. Validation panels must assure themselves that the programme represents an appropriate educational experience for students and that it conforms to internal and external strategies, benchmarks and other relevant indicators. Validation panels, which are chaired by experienced University College staff with substantial teaching experience and prior experience of validation either in the University College or other relevant institutions, exercise delegated authority from the Academic Board through ASC, to reach a conclusion about a proposal. The QSO produces a report and manages the process of confirming it. It is the responsibility of the ASC to monitor any conditions attached to a recommendation for validation.

53 The University College has also recently revisited its validation procedures, not because it is concerned that they lack rigour or that they are not evidence-based but because the burdens imposed on programme teams have been considered excessive. The current process, which operates in two stages, has also produced

conflicting advice to programme teams on occasion. A Working Party, established by ASC, reviewed practice during 2004 with a view to reducing the complexity of the two-stage validation process and the repetitive nature of much documentation. As a result, simplified procedures have been implemented on a pilot basis in five validations during the academic year 2004-05. Similarly, ASC has considered a proposal to introduce a more streamlined process of review alongside the implementation of a periodic review process (called revalidation) on a six-year cycle, with a mid-point review. On the limited evidence so far available to it, the audit team concurred that some streamlining was likely to produce the benefits the University College sought without sacrificing necessary levels of scrutiny.

54 The University College has developed a process of interim validation to cover changes to programmes which occur between validation and periodic revalidation. Relevant changes include those to assessment regulations or methods and changes to the structure, content or learning styles of the programme of study. Proposed changes require approval from the Head of Subject and the SQC as well as from the relevant external examiner before formal approval by the ASC.

55 The SED indicated that annual monitoring at the University College is a four-stage process which involves the preparation of annual monitoring reports by Programme or Subject Committees; scrutiny of those reports by SQCs, culminating in the production of a School Annual Report; scrutiny of the School Annual Reports by ASC; and preparation of an Annual Statement, received by both ASC and Academic Board before submission both to the Board of Governors and the University of Southampton. The submission of this report to the University of Southampton will cease from 2008 when the University College intends to ensure that institutional-level reporting from Academic Board to the Board of Governors continues to include scrutiny by ASC and Academic Board.

56 The University College believes that the robustness of its annual monitoring process is

enhanced by the operation of random audit by ASC. In this process, one unit of annual review from each School is randomly selected by ASC for scrutiny by small teams. The purpose of random audit is to check that the annual monitoring process has been effectively discharged with proper attention to the University College's procedures. Through scrutiny of documentation, the audit team was able to confirm that the random audit process worked effectively and that constructive comments for improvement at School level were made as a result.

57 Through its scrutiny of documentation, the audit team concluded that the University College's internal validation, review and monitoring processes were thorough and effective. However, it appreciated why the University College was seeking to reduce the burden of these processes. Its scrutiny of the new pilot system gave the team confidence that the University College would be able to implement a revised validation system across the institution which was equally robust while also being less burdensome and time-consuming.

External participation in internal review processes

58 In seeking to maintain academic standards and quality, the University College places considerable emphasis on scrutiny by external stakeholders. The SED states that quality processes are enhanced through consistent engagement with external advisers through validation and revalidation procedures. External participation is a requirement of the validation and revalidation processes.

59 Since validation panels should be able to make impartial judgments on the comparability of a course with similar courses offered in HE elsewhere in the UK, the University College thinks it important to include persons familiar with current developments within a given field of study. Validation panels must include at least one person with relevant experience of industry, commerce, public service or the professions and one with appropriate academic expertise. External representatives are selected by the Chair of the relevant SQC in consultation with

the QSO. The SED stated that the University College aims to appoint external representatives from a variety of backgrounds.

60 For panels concerned with University of Southampton awards, there must be at least one person nominated by the University of Southampton. External members of validation panels should not be existing or recent external examiners or those who had been members of University College staff during the previous five years.

61 Externality in the process of annual monitoring is secured by requiring each SQC chair acting as the external member of another SQC and, by rotating membership, to ensure that School Chairs who hold office for at least three years acquire a knowledge of the business of the three other Schools. The audit team considered that the opportunity for representatives of one school to acquire this wider insight and thus a broader understanding of University College policy was an example of good practice in the monitoring and review process.

62 From its reading of validation and review reports and of AMRs, and also in its meetings with staff, the audit team formed the view that forms of external involvement in University College validation and review processes were appropriate.

External examiners and their reports

63 The SED stated that external examiners play a wide-ranging role in monitoring quality in accordance with the *Code of practice*. The University College believes that the three main purposes of the external examining system are to assist the University College in comparison of academic standards across HE awards, to confirm that the University College's assessment processes are fair and to verify that the standards reached are appropriate for the award. External examiners operate within a two-tier examination board system. Subject Examination Boards consider standards and marking across a range of modules taken by students. School Examination Boards focus upon the standards of awards and progression between levels. Each School must appoint a

School external examiner, sometimes referred to as the Chief Examiner, and each award-bearing programme should have at least one external examiner attached to it. The University College's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook indicates that the external examiner fulfils roles of moderator of the examination process, calibrator of academic standards for the awards being examined, adjudicator and consultant.

64 Both in meetings and through scrutiny of documentation, the audit team enquired about the role of the external examiner as consultant since it was concerned that a conflict could arise with the same person acting as an adjudicator on standards and providing advice as a 'critical friend'. Although not all staff were clear about the significance of the distinction, it was clear that a colleague involved in a validation process would not shortly thereafter be appointed external examiner for the same programme. The team found no evidence of a blurring of roles. However, the University College might wish to consider whether the statement made in its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook about the external examiner as consultant is open to misconstruction.

65 All external examiners submit annual written reports on a standard template which requires them to comment on the standards of the University College's awards, on student performance, the quality of the programmes and the overall quality of the programmes examined. These reports are received by the QSO which analyses them for any common themes emerging across programmes. Reports are circulated to the relevant senior managers to the Heads of School, Chairs of SQCs and individual Programme Leaders.

66 External examiner reports form a key element in the annual monitoring process. Primary responsibility for a response to them lies at the programme level. It is the responsibility of SQCs to ensure that each external examiner's report receives a response, that appropriate action to deal with comments has been considered and, where appropriate, put in train. An annual summary of comments is compiled twice a year by the QSO and this

summary is discussed by ASC. It itemises areas of strength and any areas thought worthy of further consideration. Finally, a report on action taken as a result of external examiner comments is made as part of the Annual Statement to the Board of Governors.

67 The audit team scrutinised a number of external examiner reports and, through study of documentation, tracked the use made of them within the University College. It noted that, although reports were generally favourable in respect of the University College's assessment regime, the standards achieved and the quality of the programmes provided, and although a number of exceptionally favourable comments were also made, some significant general concerns were raised. These particularly concerned anonymous marking, plagiarism regulations and penalties and the appropriate academic level of FDs.

68 The audit team took the view that the University College ensured comments were investigated at programme, school and institutional levels. Many external examiners stated that comments made either by them or by their predecessors had been constructively addressed. The University College could also provide evidence that issues raised had led to action. The team considered that, in general, external examiner reports were constructively used and that the University College had provided evidence of beneficial changes having been made in response to them. The team was able to confirm that the University College's external examiners were making an appropriate contribution to the maintenance and enhancement of the standards of its awards. The University College will, however, wish to keep under review the processes by which responses to previous reports are made since a number of external examiners were concerned that recommendations previously made had not been acted upon.

External reference points

69 The SED indicated that all University College processes retain either an explicit or implicit relationship with the Academic

Infrastructure. The University College's Assessment Strategy indicates that due account should be taken of relevant external referents, including the *Code of practice*, subject benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the requirements of other external bodies. University College policy has been to embed the *Code* within institutional policy and practices, led by central committees and Directors of Support Services in consultation with academic staff, rather than asking for individual response to be made at School level. The SED states that this is consistent with the University College's approach to policy development and management.

70 At programme level, the University College's Learning and Teaching Strategy requires programme teams to take account of relevant external requirements, such as subject benchmarks, employer expectations and expectations of external agencies.

71 ASC oversees the process of development of programme specifications and it undertook a major review of these during 2003. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook clarifies that programme specifications should be owned by the programme team and that they should show inherent recognition of national benchmarks, indicating what internal and external reference points were used in the design of the programme.

72 Programmes are required to refer both to the FHEQ and to relevant subject benchmark statements during the validation and review processes which are carried out at school level. The SED stated that the University College engages actively with those aspects of the *Code of practice* which require engagement at institutional level, although it notes that this approach has worked more effectively in academically-related areas than in pastoral and support ones.

73 The audit team's study of documentation indicated that the University College's examination of external reference points had been extensive. The University College has addressed all sections of the *Code of practice*,

including those sections which had recently been revised, although it acknowledges that some work needs to be done on certain sections and has incorporated both the FHEQ and appropriate subject benchmark statements into its programme design. During its work at programme level, however, and in its study of programme specifications, the team noted that some staff had not taken as much cognisance of FHEQ as of subject benchmarks. The University College may wish to consider encouraging greater engagement with FHEQ at programme level as part of the process of setting and maintaining standards.

Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies

74 Since publication of the HEQC audit report in 1996, the University College has participated in 10 subject reviews conducted by QAA. All reports resulted in the provision being approved and the SED drew attention to the achievement of progressively higher scores over the period.

75 In the full cycle of subject review, the University College participated in a total of 14 reviews. The audit team noted that recent programme-level reviews had indicated strong performance in key areas, including curriculum, teaching and quality assurance. It also formed the view that the University College had taken appropriate steps to address specific areas of weakness in one rapidly growing area of its provision and that revalidation processes had proved robust and effective.

76 The University College has been involved in a small number of engagements with PSRBs, whose reports form part of the normal response to validation events and reviews. The SED acknowledged that responsibility for communication with PSRBs lay largely at subject and school level.

77 The audit team was concerned that, when PSRB reports made recommendations concerning resources and student numbers, these were referred to the CMG rather than through quality assurance mechanisms. The SED indicated that the University College intended to formalise the

reporting of PSRB reviews in order to share good practice and to enable the University College to have a more effective overview of the thrust of such reviews. In meetings, the team learned that the QSO was now tracking when PSRB reports occur. Institutional-level issues arising from these had recently begun to be raised at ASC. It was intended that opportunities for enhancement deriving from PSRB reports would be raised in the annual report to the Board of Governors. The team encourages the University College to continue to develop formal mechanisms whereby it gains insight into both generic concerns and enhancement opportunities raised through PSRB reports.

Student representation at operational and institutional level

78 The SED stated that students are represented at programme, school and institutional level except where the appointment of external examiners and some staffing matters are discussed. At programme/school level representatives are elected from within the programme/school and are known as StARs (Student Academic Representatives). There are one or two StARS per year for each programme. Representatives for SQC are found from among StARS, although there are difficulties in obtaining representatives. The SU makes nominations for representatives to sit on institutional committees.

79 SU representatives sit on Academic Board, ASC, SACC and Board of Governors. Research students have representatives at school level who sit on the Research Degrees Committee, but there is no SU representative for postgraduates. The audit team learnt that responsibility for student representation has been handed over to the SU who have a Representation and Union Development (RUD) Co-ordinator employed full-time to work in the SU. The RUD provides representatives with guidance and training in conjunction with Schools in the form of leaflets, web resources and email updates provided.

80 The SED described a number of measures used to improve awareness and understanding of the representative system including newsletters, promotional postcards, talks to first

years, glossary of relevant terms, business cards for the representatives, library of minutes of meetings, postings to the VLE, best practice examples and guidelines. However, appointing and motivating representatives continues to be a challenge. The RUD has carried out a survey of StARS, a seven-point plan is proposed for the future, and the StAR guidelines are being reviewed. Responsibility for finding StARS lies with the Programme Director and the RUD's database shows that all the positions are filled, but attendance at some meetings remains poor; the audit team learnt that part-time StARs find attendance particularly difficult as meetings tend to take place during the day.

81 The SU thought the level of representation was excellent and commented that students were consulted on a wide range of matters. However, other students that the audit team met felt that they would approach staff directly if they had reason to complain or suggestions to make rather than using StARS. Whereas StARS felt they were listened to by the University College, and students that the team met saw changes come about as a result of representation, not all students were as enthusiastic about the system. Some students felt that action promised at committee meetings was not necessarily followed up and although the SWS stated that students felt they were able to speak their minds and were listened to it also stated that it is difficult to achieve a collective view within the modular structure of combined honours.

82 Further, students found that access to institutional facilities across the Schools, to enable student representatives to feedback to their constituents (such as distribution list email or VLE sites) was variable. The audit team therefore encourages the University College to engage schools and departments in improving mechanisms for StARS to more easily feedback to their constituents.

83 The audit team formed the opinion that, while the representation system at the University College was well embedded, it could be strengthened and applied more consistently.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

84 The 1996 HEQC quality audit of King Alfred's College, Winchester, made an advisable recommendation to ensure that the analysis of feedback questionnaire material is useful. In response the University College has instituted an institution-wide Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) which is independent and allows cross-checking with information emerging from module and programme data. The SSS is carried out each May. The report on this survey goes to the SACC in November and then to Academic Board, Planning and Resources Committee (APRC) and the Board of Governors. This survey is said to provide a holistic overview which includes the experiences of combined honours students not captured elsewhere (see below). It is planned to administer this survey by email next year. The response rate to the SSS was 12.5 per cent and the audit team recommends that the University College endeavours to find ways to improve these response rates in order to improve the reliability and validity of feedback data.

85 In addition to the institution-wide SSS, research students are emailed a satisfaction survey after the AMR is compiled. Feedback is also collected at programme level where module evaluation is carried out within all programmes. This is either through questionnaires and/or a review meeting. Comments go to the Programme Committee on which students sit, and form the basis for module development which feeds into action plans for the AMR and thence into programme validations and reviews. Evidence collected by the audit team in the DATs shows that this feedback is used to bring about changes.

86 Feedback from students is also obtained six weeks after induction and the report derived from this goes to the SACC. This Post Induction survey shows that the majority of students had met their personal tutor in the first week and most were positive about their induction experience. However, only one student from the School of Social Sciences responded. The University College is again encouraged to

investigate strategies to improve the representativeness of feedback from this survey.

87 Feedback is also sought from students who withdraw. They are contacted by post or telephone and results are reported to the CMG. In addition, various focus groups are used to obtain student views such as the Disability Action Forum and the Information Technology and Communication Services (ITCS) and Library User Groups which report to the Information Services Committee (ISC). Views from students on information technology (IT) facilities are also gathered informally at the IT help desk and students can voice views through Campus Net. The audit team also learnt that open days are used, in part, to minimise the risk of early withdrawals since they provide pre-entry advice about the nature, requirements and overall demand of the programmes of study that students are intending to follow.

88 The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) results are analysed after they are received from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The data is useful in providing assurance that University College students are employable. The audit team learnt that the University College would like to engage in longitudinal studies relating to employment of their students, and encourages the University College to do this with a view to enhancing standards and quality of learning provision. One example the team was told about was of the social care studies programme. Feedback from students resulted in a placement being incorporated within the programme so students could gain the NVQ3 alongside their degree which allows them to register and obtain relevant employment. The Careers Service report on DLHE to Academic Board (Nov 2004) did not include HEFCE Performance Indicators although the University College's Strategic Plan 2005-06 to 2010-11 suggests that the University College is performing above its benchmark. In line with the University College's Strategic Plan to ensure the employability of students, it is encouraged by the team to consider the DLHE results in the light of the HEFCE performance indicators.

89 The SED referred to the particular challenges of combined honours programmes and to the difficulty of identifying the combined honours experience through the programme-level feedback. The SSS does not appear to address combined honours issues directly, although flexibility in option/module choice had one of the lowest scores of satisfaction in academic provision in the SSS 2004. This confirmed what the audit team had heard from combined honours students themselves who felt that not all options were available to them because of timetabling difficulties; the focus, they felt, was on single honours. Combined honours students reported that bunching of assignments and calculating the degree classification were both problematic, as did single honours students. The University College is piloting a new and simpler validation procedure which will also ensure that combined honours students' needs are catered for. The team encourages the University College to gather feedback specifically aimed at addressing combined honours students.

90 The SED stated that employers' feedback is obtained from volunteering opportunities and the Job Shop, however, it went on to state that this could be better structured in order for it to be more useful. In addition, information from FD employers is used to feed into curriculum design and feedback from Graduate Apprenticeship employers and from School placements informs academic staff of the progress of placements. The Business Advisory Group is used to exchange information about the knowledge transfer activities of the University College with local and regional organisations and to receive input from them.

91 Overall, the audit team formed the opinion that feedback was gathered from students on a variety of occasions and that this was used to inform and introduce changes including changes in the curricula. However, the team encourages the University College to consider strategies to improve response rates and representativeness to increase the reliability and validity of feedback from students to the institution, to ensure that results are presented

in the most meaningful way, perhaps by making more use of performance indicators, and to ensure that combined honours students' needs and issues are identified.

Progression and completion statistics

92 The SED explained that a number of data sets are produced throughout the year which are intended to facilitate analysis of performance at both subject and institutional level. At the end of each academic year, the Planning Unit produces performance profile reports and module result statistics which can be used by programme teams to inform their AMRs, in particular to comment upon trends in student performance and to discuss possible improvements for the coming cycle. For comparison purposes, past reports are held centrally, and the SED reported that in recent years Schools have been encouraged to archive profile reports and module statistics to encourage staff to use these as reference material. However, the SED did not explain how or whether this is achieved, and the audit team found variable and limited use of this material within subject AMRs and module evaluations.

93 At its September/October meeting, ASC receives an analysis, prepared by the QSO, of the previous year's student performance. A more detailed set of statistics is included in the Annual Statement of Student Performance, received by ASC in February. The SED explained that the 2003-04 statistics were used to inform discussion at SQC level. However, the audit team found that such discussions were recorded only at a general level in minutes and that there was little evidence that such data had informed planning by subject teams.

94 The SED acknowledged that there is likely to be variable general understanding of what constitutes progression, retention and completion within the institution and that programme leaders are in need of further training/guidance in analysing data. This is recognised to be a weakness, and the audit team learnt in meetings that the University College recognised the limitations of the current data systems, the presentation of data, the limited use

made of it within Schools and the need for staff development in this area. The team also heard that plans are in hand to replace the current systems over the next two years. The team agrees with the institution that it should seek to encourage a common and clear understanding of the meaning of progression, retention and completion. The team encourages the University College to reflect on the appropriate balance between centrally provided and locally generated data and data analysis, and on the need for a staff development programme to enable staff to make informed use of student profile and achievement data in quality enhancement. The team considers it advisable for the University College to ensure that its data processes are fit for purpose, appropriately targeted and consistently used both centrally and across the schools to inform learning, teaching and assessment strategies.

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

95 The University College has gained, and subsequently retained, Investor in People status. The procedures for the appointment of full-time and fractional academic staff are described in the University College's Recruitment and Selection Manual. This is currently being updated and will be more accessible to staff once this updating is completed and it is put on CampusNet. Associate Staff, who are hourly paid staff brought in by the University College for their specialist expertise, are either approached directly and offered employment, or recruited through open advertisement. Whichever route is followed, all contract documentation is issued by the Human Resources department. A programme of training in recruitment and selection is mandatory for all Chairs of appointment panels. A separate staff handbook is produced for full-time and associate lecturers.

96 The University College's policy on academic staff induction, mentoring and review describes the support structures available for new academic staff. This includes an induction

programme, supplemented by additional support in the Schools, including the appointment of a mentor. There is also the opportunity for early review of progress, so that the need for any additional support may be identified. This procedure then dovetails into the Academic Staff Development and Appraisal Scheme which applies to all academic staff. The audit team met with recently appointed and probationary staff and learnt that this group of staff considered that they were well supported through the provision of a mentor, involvement in co-teaching and team teaching with experienced staff, a reduced teaching load in the first term of appointment, relief from module coordination responsibilities, and flexible arrangements for part-time staff.

97 The SED explained that the current Staff Development and Appraisal Scheme, established in 1998, provides academic staff with a regular entitlement to address issues relating to their professional and academic development with a senior manager. There is a separate scheme for support staff. The previous audit report stated that it was desirable that the University College should consider 'Reviewing whether the relationship between two-year contracts and biennial appraisal remains appropriate in the current staffing situation'. The audit team was pleased to learn that the University College intends to harmonise appraisal procedures and has settled on annual appraisal for all University College staff.

98 Heads of School are responsible for conducting all academic appraisals, although this responsibility has often been delegated, usually to those with subject or programme leadership responsibilities. The SED acknowledged that local variations in practice exist between Schools, reflecting the different structures of each School, and that these local variations have been allowed by the University College but that it is now moving to a more formal review and clarification of these arrangements.

99 The University College's procedure on Grading and Promotion of Staff describes the means by which academic staff may apply for promotion to a higher grade, and the criteria

they are expected to meet. This currently takes the form of an annual promotion round, and consideration is given to written applications which are supported by references which are both internal and external. The SED acknowledged that staff appraisal systems are intended to be supportive of such aspirations but that this link could be better developed, although there is no indication of how this might be achieved. The academic staff group which met the audit team confirmed that they understood the staff development and appraisal schemes and had found the appraisal process helpful to them in developing their academic career with the University College. The appraisal process is confidential between the appraiser and appraisee, however staff who are appraised may make use of evidence gathered during the process to support staff development proposals. The team encourages the University College to develop more explicit systems to link staff appraisal to career development.

100 The SED made it clear that the University College's promotion criteria, in effect, reflect the types of activity which the University College wishes to encourage and support, and therefore the promotion process is an integral part of a reward strategy. The promotion criteria give applicants the opportunity to demonstrate excellence in teaching, research and administration, and have been reviewed to ensure their fitness for purpose by the LTC and by the R&KTC in preparation for the introduction of the new proposed single pay and grading structure. Other forms of reward described in the SED include entitlement to staff development, a long service award, a system of honoraria, accelerated incremental progression and a staff reward scheme. The staff group that met with the audit team said that they understood the University College promotion criteria and other reward systems and that the latter had become more focused on teaching in line with the University College's mission. The team formed the view that the University College's promotion and reward systems make a positive contribution to the achievement of its strategic objectives.

Assurance of the quality of teaching through staff support and development

101 The SED emphasised that the main responsibility for assuring the quality of teaching through staff support and development is devolved to the Schools. In each School there is a learning and teaching coordinator, whose responsibility is to be aware of good practice and to promote innovative approaches to learning and teaching throughout the School. The audit team learnt, through its meetings with academic staff, of examples of good practice by learning and teaching coordinators in carrying out their roles, including their promotion of, and support for staff pursuing, learning and teaching fellowships, and the opportunities being taken to promote dissemination of good practice through their close involvement in staff development away days and the work of the LTC. The team concluded that the University College's continuing development of the role of the learning and teaching coordinators and their effective integration into University College processes for the enhancement of quality, was an example of good practice in the devolution of quality enhancement to Schools.

102 The University College acknowledged in the SED that expectations of specific observation activities for particular purposes could be articulated more clearly in its guidance, and proposes to review this during the current academic year. The need for this was confirmed through the audit team's discussions with academic and senior staff about peer observation and review. The team learnt that peer observation of teaching was widely regarded as an informal process that happened as part of co-teaching and team teaching approaches, but that it is not tracked or linked in a formal and structured sense to the development and enhancement of teaching practice. The team also discovered considerable misconception about what constituted peer observation, several staff believing that it was synonymous with the widespread practice in the University College of team teaching. The team formed the view that peer observation

was not currently being used effectively to identify and disseminate good practice nor to support staff development and review, and considered that it would be advisable for the University College to carry through its proposals for review of peer observation of teaching, and to implement a programme of staff development for reviewers.

103 The audit team was informed that 14 learning and teaching awards had been made since 2003, and that these had now been replaced by learning and teaching fellowships, allocated annually through a bidding process managed by the LTC. The team learnt of the benefits to the individuals and their schools of the learning and teaching awards, and that these benefits were being disseminated through publication of projects on the University College website and the formal requirement that projects are presented to meetings of the learning and teaching committee and staff development events, and would encourage the University College to continue to develop the potential benefits through the new fellowship scheme.

104 The previous audit report said that it was desirable that the University College should consider, 'making training in teaching more systematically available to new appointees and ensuring that new staff have access to support that best matches their needs'. The SED explained that the University College offers the Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Educational Studies: Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PgCAESLTHE), which was accredited by the HE Academy in July 2004 for staff new to teaching in HE responsible for the design and delivery of at least 30 hours of structured HE learning, or any other staff who wish to gain a professional qualification linked to their teaching role.

105 All sessions on the PgCAESLTHE are open to any member of staff. The SED stated that the course is offered to HE staff working in partner colleges, and that undertaking the course is made a formal condition of probation for new members of staff. The audit team learnt that the PgCAESLTHE is obligatory for all new academic staff who have not previously taught

in HE, and that it is made available to existing staff, supported by devolution of L&T funding to the Schools to release academic staff to follow the programme.

106 Through its meetings with staff the audit team formed the view that arrangements for staff support and development at School level worked effectively as a supplement to a centrally provided programme of staff development activities in ensuring that all staff had equivalent access to appropriate support and development. Such activities have included separate away days for learning and teaching, and for research and knowledge transfer, support for staff to attend external conferences and seminars. The team learnt of a new scheme for work shadowing that had clear potential for development more widely across the institution, to support staff in their career progression. The team formed the view that there was a good range of high quality staff development activity, and that the balance of central and devolved responsibilities ensured that staff development was both relevant and appropriate to institutional and staff needs.

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

107 The University College currently offers no distance-learning provision. It is developing several formal partnerships with FE colleges in the region which have responsibility for delivery of a number of University College awards.

108 For the past four years the University College has provided a VLE which underpins its flexible and distributed course provision. The SED describes how this provides flexible access to a range of learning resources, including programme handbooks, lecture notes, on-line publications, academic expertise and training. Student feedback on the system has helped inform its development and students registered on flexible programmes, such as the flexible PGCE and EMAP Healthcare Open Learning Enrolled Nurse Conversion Programme have made a particular contribution in this respect.

109 It is the University College's view that VLE has played an important part in improving the arrangements for inducting and supporting off-campus learners, a view which was confirmed to the audit team in discussions with students. In developing this area the University College has been mindful of the *Code of practice*.

110 During the academic year 2003-04 a 'Networked Learning Group' had been established to consider a range of teaching and learning issues raised by the introduction of VLE approaches and, although informal, the group has begun to influence the support for distributed learners. The University College plans a substantial growth to its distributed student numbers, and the Networked Learning Group is likely to have an important future role in addressing the teaching and learning issues raised by distributed learning, along with practical solutions such as distance learning, Campus Net, and the VLE.

111 In discussions the audit team had with students, it was confirmed that they found the VLE to be a particularly valuable means of accessing a range of information including course material and assessment information. It also potentially provides a means by which part-time students, and those not based at the main Winchester Campus, could keep in contact with the University College and so help them to feel part of the University College community.

Learning support resources

112 The majority of the University College's learning support resources are delivered by two central departments, the Library and the ITCS. The Information Strategy was updated in 2002 and defines principles for the management of information, and the direction of service developments including those that support learning and teaching. The development and implementation of the strategy is overseen by the ISC which reports to Academic Board and to the APRC on matters to do with infrastructure and buildings. The Library submits an annual report to the ISC which details activity and gives comparative statistics for similar HE institutions. The Librarian and the

Director of ITCS are both ex officio members of these committees and of LTC, and attend ASC for the review of the School AMRs.

113 Books, periodicals and other resources are centrally housed in the Martial Rose Library within the King Alfred (Winchester) campus. For students based at Basingstoke, a collection of relevant core texts is located at the Chute House campus and students may request books and journals from the main library which are delivered by a daily van service. Where courses are delivered at other locations off-site, the SED explained that the Librarian ensures that an appropriate level of support is provided and that books and periodicals are available where the students are taught. This is tested at the approval event for off-site delivery of a programme. The students based at Bournemouth and Poole College and Chute House who met with the auditors considered that they had good access to book and journal resources.

114 School liaison librarians work with staff and students in their specialist area. A book and periodical fund is allocated to Schools based on student numbers. The SED noted that there is ongoing concern about the provision of sufficient texts from reading lists which the University College states is being addressed through a short term loan system, and improvement in the flow of information from tutors to ensure the correct numbers and loan categories are in place, at the right time; the position is monitored annually through the library survey. The audit team's meetings with undergraduate and postgraduate students revealed broad satisfaction with the University College library service both on the King Alfred campus and at off-site locations. In some subjects module packs are produced containing key readings which are available for purchase by students.

115 An R&KT Centre provides postgraduate research students with a 'drop in centre' where they can go for support and advice, specialist research resources and office facilities. The postgraduate research students who met with the audit team were enthusiastic in their support for, and use of, the R&KT Centre. The Research Manager holds 'surgeries' for research students,

and there are scheduled sessions for research students to gather and provide support for each other. The team viewed the work of the R&KT Centre as a strong, supportive and well-focused facility, especially in its support for postgraduate research students and in the enhancement of a postgraduate research culture.

116 The audit team was told that postgraduate research students, who are registered for degrees at the University of Southampton, had restricted access to the library facilities at that University. While senior staff expressed their view that library facilities at the University College were sufficient to meet the needs of postgraduate research students, and that this was the expectation of Southampton University, the team remained concerned that postgraduate research students might encounter some difficulties because of the current arrangements in respect of access to library, and especially book and journal, resources. The team encourages the University College to engage in discussions with the University of Southampton, with a view to seeing whether postgraduate research students registered for degrees at the University of Southampton have access to that University's library facilities on the same basis as the University of Southampton's own students.

117 All students are issued with computer accounts on registration, and have the opportunity to attend IT training sessions, either as part of a study skills programme or in small group or one-to-one sessions. The King Alfred campus hosts two open-access IT centres, one of which offers 24-hour access and hosts a student helpdesk. Students in Basingstoke have access to an IT suite at Chute House which is also used for teaching, and two open access PCs. The SED stated that where academic programmes are delivered at other institutions the Director of ITCS or the Head of Learning Technology assesses the suitability of the facilities and makes a report to the approval of delivery event. The students who study off-site that spoke with the audit team were generally pleased with the resources support available for their programmes.

118 A Multimedia Centre contains video editing, radio and TV studio, video and music editing facilities, and the equipment loan counter. These facilities are available for students to book and use out-of-hours using a card access system. The audit team heard that in some subjects, subject administrators' newsletters were used to apprise staff and students of new resource developments and provision.

119 The SSS 2003-04 indicated that students were satisfied with the majority of issues relating to the library and related resources. The audit team broadly shared the students' view that library and other related resources were adequate.

Academic guidance, support and supervision

120 The SED stated that the separation, or not, of personal and academic support and guidance has been under review for the last 10 years. The audit team was told that the role of Academic Adviser has now been combined with that of Personal Tutor and that students are normally allocated a Personal Tutor in their subject area and see them in the first week of term. Students can make appointments to see their tutor, although most tutors operate an open door policy. Students that the team met felt their tutors were accessible, flexible and helpful.

121 Personal tutors are given a Handbook which outlines their role. Students can be referred on to other staff for specialist help. From the generally positive responses given by students about tutor accessibility, the audit team found that students could generally access appropriate tutors readily. The University College's view is that this is a student-driven system and there is no institution-wide mechanism for systematically monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the School systems in this area.

122 In addition to personal tutors there are module and programme tutors who give guidance on particular assignments, for example, on essay writing skills, Registry staff give guidance on module selection, academic regulations and appeals, study abroad and

exchange programmes. After the end of year results, there is a Student Advice week for students to access support from staff.

123 The 1996 audit report recommended that it was advisable that central support staff should be up to date in relation to information about professional bodies. The audit team was informed that such information is supplied by Registry and that a project is underway to look at the student records system. A key goal of the Information Strategy is to make data both more accessible and more accurate. The team was informed, in respect of information about professional and other related bodies, that staff generally liaised directly with the relevant academic department in order to provide students with appropriate advice and support.

124 The audit team was told that formal study skills were provided by the Study Skills Co-ordinator or teaching staff within some curricula identified by the programme leader, such as education courses. In addition, Student Services offer central support by means of a programme of study skills courses. This support may be one-to-one or through small group workshops. An on-line assessment of study skills is being considered and the Study Skills coordinator is developing a diagnostic test. Students can be referred to Student Services for assessment of weaknesses, dyslexia or English language ability. However, there is no overall plan to introduce diagnostic testing in terms of the needs likely to be identified as a result of widening participation (see paragraph 136 below).

125 Part-time undergraduate students who the audit team met did not associate any difficulties with being part-time and felt they received all the information they needed to undertake their course. The VLE helped them to feel part of the community. Similarly, the taught postgraduates reported that teaching was arranged for times convenient for part-time students.

126 Guidance for work-based learning is informed by the *Code of practice* and is supported by examples of good practice. Students on placement are allocated a special tutor.

127 Personal Development Profiles are being developed and funding at School level will enable profiling to take place by 2005-06 (see paragraph 140 below). The Learning and Teaching Coordinators will be monitoring progress in each School and reporting to LTC.

128 The audit team formed a positive opinion of the supportiveness of staff in their academic relations with students, including with part-time students, and found that their accessibility on a formal and informal basis, and the infrastructure the University College had put in place in the form of Resource/Common rooms in some subjects which fostered a cohesive staff/student environment, was a feature of good practice.

129 The University College has 65 research students, mostly part-time. Research students are given a Personal Tutor, who is different from the supervisor, and are allocated to supervisory teams which must include those experienced in research supervision. Some supervisors may be from outside the University College. All research student supervisors receive a copy of the Postgraduate Research Handbook which contains the University College's Guidelines on Supervision and Monitoring of Research Students, Southampton University's Code of Practice, the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, published by QAA, and Regulations for Research Degrees. Due to the revision of the *Code, Section 1* in 2004, current arrangements will be reviewed. Supervisor training is monitored very closely and the University College is including a section in this year's SSS to gather information about how satisfactory the system of supervision is for research students.

130 The postgraduate research students are registered for University of Southampton degrees. Annual progress reports are scrutinised by the Research Degrees Committee which meets monthly and students not making progress are interviewed by the Head of the R&KT Centre. These reports are then submitted to the University of Southampton.

131 The R&KT Centre is monitored by the R&KTC and offers core services to postgraduate students. It also assists income generation and

developing partnerships. The SED stated that full-time research students have office space; there is a drop in centre for research students in the R&KT Centre and a dedicated research student workroom. The audit team believes the R&KT Centre seems to be a strong, supportive and well-focused facility.

132 Research training is provided through an accredited two-year programme run one evening a week and supported by a research training handbook and module handbooks. Accreditation of prior (experiential) learning is possible for students who bring appropriate skills to their study. The audit team heard from students that the training programme works well and is appreciated. Research students who teach in the University College must undertake teaching training and are supported by a mentoring system. They have full access to the Staff Development Programme.

133 Research students are grouped with cognate active research staff to ensure a critical mass and effective interactions. A weekly Postgraduate Forum provides opportunities for interaction with peers and experienced researchers. They attend conferences, seminars and the R&KT Day. They are encouraged to present papers both at the University College and beyond. The audit team formed the view that research students are monitored, that there is a lively engagement with research students and that a supportive culture is in place.

134 The audit team formed the view that the work of the R&KT Centre was a feature of good practice since its infrastructure effectively supported research students, enhanced the postgraduate research culture and helped to integrate research-based income generation with external partnerships.

Personal support and guidance

135 The SED stated that academic staff are central to support and guidance through the Personal Tutor scheme and their day to day involvement with students. At institutional level, student support is coordinated by Student Services which reports to the SACC which itself reports to Academic Board and the Board of

Governors. SACC oversees the pastoral care of students, the work of the Careers Service and the annual SSS.

136 Student Services has a five-year strategic plan and provide a comprehensive range of support services and advice including welfare, counselling and careers advice. It produces a Handbook which all students receive at enrolment, run workshops and provide a range of support handouts and booklets. They also have a desk in the library where students can make appointments and they go to lectures to inform students of their work. SACC publishes guidelines and policies on CampusNet. For students on placement there are additional specialised support mechanisms such as placement tutors and handbooks.

137 A growing area of work in Student Services is in dyslexia and disability which is picked up through self referral on the UCAS form, or sometimes by an academic. The audit team was interested to note that disabled and dyslexic students and those with mental health difficulties have confidential Learning Agreements drawn up by the Disability Coordinator so relevant academic staff are aware of the need to support the students academically. Staff can access support from School Offices to assist them for this. Extra support for students is provided by dyslexia student advisers. The University College may, however, in implementing the widening participation agenda as set out in the Strategic Vision, wish to consider a more systematic and universal approach to diagnostic testing including for numeracy and literacy skills.

138 In addition to the personal tutors, support staff in School offices, Registry, Library and Student Services also provide advice and students may be referred by them to academic staff or to Student Services for guidance and support. Student Services' receptionists are trained to assess students' needs and to refer them on appropriately. Hall Wardens and Senior Students support those who are resident on campus. Senior Students, who are trained for their role, were viewed very favourably by students for their role in looking after first year

students in residences, welcoming them and helping them to settle in.

139 The Careers Service was included in the Student Services award of the Matrix quality standard for organisations delivering information, advice and guidance services in February 2005. The audit team was told that feedback gathered using questionnaires is used to introduce changes. The SED stated that careers provision relates broadly to the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information and guidance*. It also stated that the University College is working on developing closer collaboration between employers and the Careers Service. Some subjects (for example, tourism and heritage and education) have built up good links with employers and generally there is a good employment record. However, students confirmed there was little emphasis on employment in some parts of the University College. The SSS of 2004, albeit operating with a small survey, found that there was dissatisfaction in more than 20 per cent of programmes on aspects of preparation for employment. The audit team encourages the Careers Service to implement the *Code, Section 8* fully in a timely fashion and, together with the University College, develop a more universal and proactive approach to the employability of students.

140 Personal Development Planning workshops are offered, along with curriculum vitae writing and interview skills, either within the curricula or through Central Careers Programme events or the Study Skills Programme.

141 Students that the audit team met were impressed with welfare provision and felt that it was easy to make appointments with Student Services who would then keep in touch with them. The support offered at institutional level was appreciated. Overall, the team formed a positive view of the arrangements for personal support and guidance at the University College and found that the University College was responsive to students' views and needs. Students who met the team generally spoke positively about the support services available.

Collaborative provision

142 At the time of the audit, the University College had no overseas collaborative partnerships. However, as part of its commitment to widening participation it had recently formed a number of links with FE colleges in the region and was in the process of extending its range of collaborative provision. The following collaborative arrangements had been approved:

- BSc Horticulture with Sparsholt College
- DipHE English with Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education and with Queen Mary's College, Basingstoke
- FD in Community Development with Cricklade College, Andover
- FD in Management with Eastleigh College
- FD in Logistics and Supply Chain with Basingstoke College of Technology.

143 However, during 2004-05 no students had been recruited to the FDs in Community Development and Management, or to the DipHE English at Queen Mary's College. (Other awards were subject to approval of delivery events in 2004-05). Consequently, at the time of the audit there were comparatively few students registered on collaborative awards. At this point two collaborative awards were in operation; 19 students were registered on the BSc Horticulture award at Sparsholt College, and 23 students registered on the DipHE English award at Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education.

144 The development of the programmes had been undertaken in accordance with the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, and formal Agreement statements have been approved setting out the respective responsibilities of the University College and its partner institutions. It was confirmed to the audit team that collaborative provision established to date operated within the established curriculum development and quality assurance processes of the University College's academic schools.

145 In discussion, staff confirmed that the University College had responsibility for aspects of the staff development of those colleagues in partner colleges charged with delivering University College awards. The audit team learnt of various initiatives designed to support the development of partner college staff. These included a three-day training event on FDs held at Eastleigh College, some opportunities to teach on awards based at the University College's main Winchester campus and a recent staff development conference which apparently had been well attended. Partner college staff were also encouraged to participate in the PgCAESLTHE, for which a module designed to meet the specific interests of FE lecturers had recently been validated. Some attempts had been made to provide induction sessions for partner college staff which had, unfortunately, proved to be largely unsuccessful due to their timing. As the partnership work of the University College develops it is encouraged to continue to ensure that timely staff development opportunities are made available for partner college staff, and that it monitors the effectiveness of these arrangements.

146 Currently, the University College librarian works closely with the staff in the partner institutions to ensure that an appropriate range of texts are available in the partner college libraries. Students in the partner colleges also have access to library provision at Winchester where they have borrowing rights. Students can request books from the main University College library which are delivered to the partner institution, and students confirmed that this system proves to be effective.

147 The University College acknowledged some initial difficulties at the course development stage of working with new partner colleges. These mainly related to aspects of course validation requirements which have now been satisfactorily resolved. However, the audit team learnt that for a number of partner colleges, these collaborative developments will be their first experience of delivering HE-level work under the validation of the University College. Consequently, the University College is

urged to work closely with the partner colleges, particularly in the early stages of the new programmes, to ensure that the level and quality of the student experience is appropriate.

148 The University College has established a RPG whose role is to 'ensure a coherent overview of the planning, development and delivery of all programmes delivered off the Winchester site'. It was understood from discussions with University College staff that to date, the role of the group had principally been concerned with relatively minor operational issues. The membership had originally included the Vice Principal (Academic), Director of Regional Academic Programmes, Chute House Manager, all off-site programme leaders, Heads of School, appropriate Heads of Subject and FD Programme Leaders. The audit team understood that membership of the group had recently been revised to include the Dean of Programmes and Quality and the QSO member with responsibility for collaborative provision. The CMG receives the minutes of the RPG.

149 The audit team welcomed the existence of a group at the level of the institution which was taking an overview of the University College's regional developments both at its Chute House campus and at partner institutions. Nonetheless, the University College is encouraged to ensure that it has effective systems in place to assure the quality and standards of its collaborative and its off-site provision and which will enable it to take an overview, at the level of the institution, of operational and quality related issues during a period of substantial planned expansion.

150 The audit team learnt that regional arrangements had been put in place to support the ongoing development of collaborative provision in the Hampshire Consortium which, more specifically, includes a number of measures to ensure the effectiveness of the new, extended, range of collaborative provision when it starts later in 2005. These include the establishment of a local forum to consider strategic issues, contact between managers of support functions in the respective institutions and, at the time of the audit, consideration was being given to the

development of a more systematic approach to staff development across the consortium.

151 In light of its planned growth in student numbers to be located at the partner colleges, the University College is encouraged to build on aspects of good practice it has identified in existing collaborative arrangements, and monitor carefully future developments to ensure that the management of quality and academic standards, and the nature of the student experience, is maintained during the period of planned expansion.

Section 3: The audit investigations: discipline audit trails

Discipline audit trails

152 In each of the selected DATs, appropriate members of the audit team met staff and students to discuss the programmes, studied a sample of assessed student work, saw examples of learning resource materials, and studied annual module and programme reports and periodic school reviews relating to the programmes. Their findings in respect of the academic standards of awards are as follows.

Drama/drama studies

153 The scope of the DAT was the following:

- BA/DipHE in Drama
- BA/DipHE in Drama Studies and
- MA/Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) in Theatre and Media for Development.

154 The undergraduate programmes in the discipline area have 396 full-time and eight part-time students and the postgraduate programmes have eight full-time and six part-time students.

155 The DSED was prepared by the programme team in the School of Community and Performing Arts. This comprised AMRs (including external examiner reports), minutes from the SQC, definitive validated documents (DVD), together with a short cover paper describing the programme team, new developments within the

programme, student progression and retention, learning resources, and maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality.

156 The DSED for the MA/PgDip Theatre and Media for Development, was separately prepared by staff in the School teaching the programme, and comprised SQC Minutes, AMRs (including external examiner reports), student numbers, progression and qualifications, responses to external examiners' reports and the DVD. There was also a short covering paper which describes the educational aims of the provision, learning outcomes, curriculum and assessment, quality of learning opportunities, maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality, and programme committee members and their relation to other committees. Specifications for all programmes were included which set out appropriate educational aims and outcomes, linked clearly to the teaching learning and assessment methods.

157 The *Subject benchmark statement* for dance, drama and performance was extensively referenced in the undergraduate programmes' DVD. There was no explicit reference to the FHEQ in the DSED and the staff teaching the programmes who met the audit team appeared uncertain of the implications of the FHEQ for academic standards. However, it was clear to the team that the appropriate subject benchmark statements and the *Code of practice* had been referenced in the design of both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and its findings, based on its review of other documentation and its discussions with staff teaching the programmes allayed any broader concerns about lack of self-reflection or criticality on the part of the drama and theatre programme teams.

158 The audit team was informed that the programme specifications are intended for potential students, and found that their written style is consistent with this intention. The team was told that all staff had been involved in the generation of the programme specifications, and that this process had been useful in the recent review and validation of the School's undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

159 The DSED provided no comparison of progression, retention and completion rates over time, and while there are general comments on employability these are unsupported by data. Programme staff told the audit team that the format of data provided centrally did not support them in taking a reflective and analytical approach to student progression and completion, but that such data was available if specifically requested. Module pass rates were scrutinised at programme level, and apparent undue variances were investigated. The undergraduate programme team commented that external examiners had been helpful in identifying potential influences on poor progression such as the structuring of a module on modernism and its assessment schedule. The pass rates for levels 1, 2 and 3 of the undergraduate programmes for 2003-04 were 94 per cent, 95 per cent and 98 per cent, while the pass rate for the postgraduate programme was 100 per cent. The audit team formed the view that more user-friendly student data, and staff development on its interpretation and analysis, would assist the programme team in monitoring quality and standards of the courses in this discipline.

160 The DSED explained that the School's procedures for monitoring and review were in line with the University College's quality framework. The minutes of the programme committee, which meets six times a year, are received by the SQC which monitors programme operation and discusses issues with School or University College level implications. The AMR is described as the principal tool of quality assurance at programme level. Feedback on learning and teaching - from module evaluations and level coordinators - is fed into the AMR. A module coordinator is responsible for each module, and prepares a module report which incorporates matters arising from the student evaluation. Issues arising from the programme AMR inform the School AMR which is prepared by the Head of Department before being forwarded to the University College ASC. Both programme and School level AMRs include action plans, and the audit team heard evidence during the visit of changes that had been made

to the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum as a result of the internal monitoring and review process. However, it is not always clear that programme level AMR action points are always followed up from the evidence of the programme committee minutes and the team would encourage the School in its intention to adopt systems to ensure that action planning loops are closed.

161 Recent external examiner reports indicate a high level of satisfaction with student achievement on the programmes under review, and confirmed that, in the examiners' view, the academic standards of the School's awards are comparable with those of other UK HE institutions. Where they had raised issues, these were detailed in the programme AMRs and responded to appropriately, in line with the University College-wide procedures documented in its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. The SQC ensures that issues raised by external examiners are addressed. The staff were able to furnish the reviewers with examples of action loops being closed following external examiner comments.

162 The audit team reviewed a range of undergraduate and postgraduate work including written course work assessments, final-year projects, consultancy reports, video-taped performance work and 'take away' exam papers. Assessment practices across the School were consistent with the University College's policies and with the *Code of practice* relating to the assessment of students.

163 The student assessments reviewed by the audit team were marked using both generic and specific assessment criteria which are published in the module handbook. The students commented that they found the assessment process fair and that they understood their marks, however, the undergraduate students were far from clear about how their module marks contributed to their degree classification. The students confirmed that they were mostly given detailed and helpful feedback on practical work, although there were some infrequent instances

of limited written feedback provided by tutors, and a small number of examples cited of work being returned late. The team was interested to learn of the development work that had been done on approaches to assessing group work and was encouraged that assessment procedures are now in place that differentiate individual contribution to group projects.

164 The audit team would encourage the undergraduate programme teams to ensure consistency in the amount and timeliness of feedback to students on assessed work, and to make a guide to degree classification available to students following the different pathways in drama and drama studies. The team found that the standard of student achievement was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

165 Course Information Handbooks are produced for each programme and are distributed to all full and part-time students. These are clearly written and contain illustrative material about the programme and the School. Students who met the audit team were positive about the accuracy, quality and amount of information that they received about their courses, both in print form and on-line.

166 The audit team was interested to learn about the contribution made to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes by external practitioners currently working in drama and performing arts and related industries. These inputs were highly valued by the students, and the undergraduates expressed a wish to see these opportunities extended to more modules of their programme. These students were highly satisfied with the diversity of modules offered within their courses, and the broad range of skills that they were acquiring through the taught programme.

167 The students considered that a distinctive feature of their undergraduate programme was the accessibility of the teaching staff and good working relationships enjoyed by staff and students. Much of the work in drama and drama studies is of a practice-based and applied nature. The audit team was told by students that access to performance spaces for

essential rehearsal, practice and preparation was often problematic and that spaces were frequently pre-booked by other courses.

168 The staff who met the audit team acknowledged that there were limitations on performance space and that there had been delays in commissioning the John Stripe Theatre. The students explained to the team that the number of extra-curricular drama activities had reduced significantly, and attributed this to the limited availability of performance spaces, but that too short notice of some events arranged by staff was also a factor. The team concluded that the School might wish to consider reviewing the procedures for booking and allocating performance spaces for non-taught sessions, to ensure that opportunities for access to available spaces are fairly spread across the full range of its courses.

169 Student views are formally sought in committees and through student satisfaction surveys. Student involvement in Programme Committees was limited and the students who met with the audit team considered that when they had matters to raise with staff about their courses they could do so informally and directly; these methods had proved effective in the past in bringing about changes, for example in getting an unsuitable room for a module changed. The team encourages the staff of the School to work more closely with the students, and perhaps with the SU, to encourage wider involvement by students in the full range of the representational committees of the School, and to raise greater awareness of their importance.

170 The audit team was satisfied that the quality of learning opportunities made available to undergraduate students was suitable for programmes of study leading to the honours award of BA/DipHE, and that the quality of learning opportunities available to taught postgraduate students was suitable for programmes of study leading to the award of MA/PgDip.

Education studies

171 The scope of the DAT was programmes leading to the following awards:

- BA (Hons) Education Studies
- BA (Hons) Education Studies (Early Childhood)
- BA/BSc Combined Honours.

172 The programmes considered as part of the DAT are located within the School of Education which additionally offers a range of initial teacher education programmes. However, these fall outside the remit of this audit as they are funded by, and subject to, accreditation by the Teacher Training Agency, with quality inspections undertaken by the Office for Standards in Education.

173 The documentation provided to support the DAT included definitive revalidation documents for the programme validated in 2003-04 (including programme specifications and module descriptions for all modules within the programme); AMRs for the academic years 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04 and minutes of the SQC meetings which received the AMRs. During the briefing visit, and in the course of the audit, the audit team was additionally provided with minutes for the academic year 2003-04 of the Programme Committee and the SQC, together with programme handbooks, and given access to the Education Studies website. Additionally a selection of students' assessed work was provided from students at different stages in the programme following single and joint awards.

174 The programme had recently been the subject of an expansion in student numbers, having increased from 24.5 FTE students in 2001-02 to 67 FTE students registered on the combined level 1 provision in 2004-05. The Programme AMR in 2002-2003 had registered its concern relating to potential compromises in quality due to the rapid growth in student numbers and a lack of commensurate resource support, principally related to staffing. However, during its meeting with subject staff, and through minutes of the Educational Studies Field Committee the audit team learnt that a new, additional, appointment had been made to the

teaching staff team in January 2005. Also, in discussion with students, the audit team learnt that the subject team had developed study support packs for students. These included copies of core reading materials and had proved to be an effective resource highly valued by students. Their use had the additional benefit of reducing pressure on the library. These were both encouraging developments. Nevertheless, the University College is urged to monitor carefully the impact of the growth in student numbers to ensure that the quality of provision and the academic standards of the award are maintained.

175 In 2003 the programme had been subject to revalidation. This process takes place in two stages, at the second of which two subject experts external to the University College and a representative of the University of Southampton were involved. The revalidated programme had proposed some fundamental changes to the assessment methods which included the abolition of formal, timed examinations. Following scrutiny of this proposal at validation it was accepted and subsequently endorsed by the ASC as it represented a variation on standard University College assessment policy. The successful validation of the programme was subject to a number of conditions and recommendations. It is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to ensure that any conditions of validation are satisfied and reported to the QSO. The programme specifications of the revised programme did not contain explicit reference to the FHEQ. Nonetheless, having reviewed the level of module learning outcomes, and considered reports of external examiners, the audit team was confident that the programme was operating at an appropriate level.

176 Annual programme monitoring had resulted in developments to the programme which included, for example, changes to the assessment structure (described above) and the suspension of a module; the latter had occurred as a direct result of student feedback. Student representation features on the Programme committee, and provides an effective formal mechanism for securing student feedback. This formal structure is complemented by a positive and open working relationship between

students and the Education Studies programme team which results in an on-going expression of student opinion to which staff respond positively. This enables some issues raised by students to be dealt with swiftly and without the necessity for recourse to more formal processes. Students found this to be a particularly positive characteristic of the Education Studies programme team.

177 AMRs included evidence of some performance data which was provided as an appendix. However, these data were in summary form and provided very limited information on students' performance with, for example, no data relating directly to retention, progression or completion rates and the audit team could find no evidence of evaluative commentary which might have indicated that the data were informing a discussion about standards and quality. Although the programme team confirmed that these data were discussed at programme committees, along with reasons for student non-completion, the absence of minutes recording such discussions suggests that perhaps the use of data, particularly relating to retention, progression and completion, is not being afforded the significance it deserves in the annual course monitoring process. The team learnt that a cross-University College review of the generation and use of data was in progress, and it encourages the University College to expedite this work so that data can more usefully inform discussions of quality and standards at the level of the programme.

178 As a result of consideration of the DSED documentation and discussion with the University College subject team, the audit team formed the view that thorough procedures were in place for the appointment of subject external examiners which reflected the relevant section of the *Code of practice*. The process provided the opportunity for the formal scrutiny of proposals at a number of levels up to, and including, the Academic Board.

179 As a result of the consideration of samples of student work and discussion with staff and students, the audit team was able to confirm

that effective assessment procedures were in place which reflected institutional strategies and policies. Clear assessment tasks were provided for students at the beginning of each module along with submission dates, assessment criteria and the date by which the assessed work would be returned to students. The Education Studies team is to be praised for the clarity of this information which was particularly valued by students. Students were, however, less clear about the algorithm the University College uses to determine final degree classification, a process which they felt lacked transparency. The programme team is encouraged to use the Student Handbook to make calculations for the degree classification clearer. Students' assignments are double marked and the completion of a standard cover sheet for each assignment provides the means by which tutors provide detailed feedback to students.

180 The audit team was satisfied that the quality of learning opportunities made available to undergraduate students was suitable and that the standards of the awards were appropriate to their location on the FHEQ.

Psychology

181 The scope of the DAT was as follows:

- BA Single Honours in Psychology
- BA Combined Honours in Psychology (main pathway, joint pathway and subsidiary pathway).

182 The programmes are located within the School of Social Sciences. These programmes were jointly revalidated in 2004. The audit team was provided with an Overview of Psychology at the University College, the Definitive Revalidation Document, which included the programme specification, along with External Examiners' reports, Responses to External Examiners' Reports, AMRs for 2001 to 2004, Programme Committee minutes 2003-04, Programme and Module Student Handbooks and samples of students' assessed work.

183 Psychology was reviewed by QAA in 1999. Also in 1999, the Psychology Combined Honours, main pathway, was accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS) with the

Graduate Basis for Registration. The single honours programme was similarly accredited in 2001. In 2002 the BPS conducted a five-year review on the Combined BSc Psychology without a visit. Both the single and combined honours, main pathway in Psychology, were reaccredited for five years with eligibility for Graduate Membership of the Society and with the Graduate Basis for Registration. The Graduate Qualifications Accreditation Committee of the BPS noted that the level of support staff was at the margins of acceptability. In 2004 the BPS conducted a resource review which required an action plan to ensure that the (academic) staff:student ratio met their minimum requirements. This action plan was accepted by the BPS in May 2005. Courses are reaccredited every five years.

184 The programme specification states that the relevant QAA Subject Benchmarking Group is Psychology and that the reference points used in designing the programme included the FHEQ and the BPS's Qualifying Syllabus. The programme specification showed evidence of mapping between the curriculum and learning outcomes, differentiating between the three levels of the programme. The validation document states that the QAA benchmark identifies an almost identical syllabus to the BPS syllabus and that learning outcomes based on these are delineated in each pathway at each level in the Psychology programme specification.

185 The audit team was provided with recent progression and retention statistics for the Psychology degree course. This information is institutionally derived and from this the department prepares progression and completion figures. Progression figures are referred to in the AMR and also in the validation document. The department considers these figures and the effectiveness of measures taken to improve them. In addition, each Module Evaluation Summary shows performance statistics and action plans for the module. This information is used to review the module and introduce changes. As an example of this, the programme team is reviewing the reduction of support offered at level 2 and is

taking an overview of the curriculum at level 2, with particular reference to certain modules with continuing poor results.

186 The AMR follows a standard format and is completed by the subject Programme Committee. It includes an action plan and annotation on the previous year's action plan. This report goes to the SQC which reports to ASC and thence to Academic Board. There is evidence that this process is used effectively to reflect on the programme and introduce changes including those requested by external examiners. Examples of changes include a pilot on anonymous marking on one module to observe the effect on feedback and a Learning and Teaching Support Network project on peer learning which was implemented in the form of Student Support Units. The audit team concluded that internal monitoring and review was effective.

187 The Psychology Department has an external examiner officer, reflecting the importance of the role of external examining in the department. The department provides annual responses to the External Examiners' reports which feed into the AMR. The audit team was provided with the reports and responses for three successive years and found the responses to the externals' comments to be thorough although issues could remain 'live' and extend over several years. Issues such as double blind marking and anonymous marking were raised in the external examiners' reports of 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04. While acknowledging that the programme team responded to these, and other comments, both in terms of their own views and, where relevant, in terms of the University College's policy, in the view of the audit team a more speedy resolution of what are important issues would be preferable.

188 The Programme Assessment Strategy is articulated in the DVD 2004 and the Programme Handbook and follows the University College's Assessment Strategy 2002-05. The latter states that the *Code of practice*, relevant benchmark statements and the FHEQ are taken into account. Generic criteria for class gradings for each year of the programme are given and each Module Handbook gives generic assessment

criteria. From the examples of Module Handbooks supplied to the team there was little information on specific assessment criteria, especially at level 1, and staff said that practice varies across the School. The audit team encourages the Department to ensure that all modules include statements of assessment and marking criteria specific to the module as advised by a number of the External Examiners for the School and as advised in the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*.

189 The policy on extensions is described in the Handbook for psychology undergraduates. The audit team encourages the University College to review the face-to-face element of making decisions about extensions of time for assessed work to bring it into line with the more objective Concessions policy. Similarly, and notwithstanding the Department's view that there have been no examples of plagiarism in the past five years, but only poor academic practice, the team encourages the department to ensure vigilance in identifying plagiarism when assessing work, in order to maintain the integrity of student authorship.

190 Students felt improvements could be made regarding specific assessment criteria, feedback (including legibility and constructiveness of comments), example essays, better spacing of assessments and exams and clearer guidance on what to do to improve their marks. The audit team noted the students' views about the level of difficulty in year two along with the external examiner's comments on performance rates in some level 2 modules. At programme level the teaching team relies on the University College to relate procedures and templates to the FHEQ rather than engaging with it directly. The team encourages staff to engage more with the FHEQ in order to assist students to progress smoothly between the levels of the programme and to review the content, assessment, guidance and level of difficulty of year two modules in the light of the FHEQ, the *Code of practice* and the *Subject benchmark statement* for psychology.

191 The audit team reviewed a sample of assessed student work at levels 2 and 3, demonstrating achievement across the range of marks. There was evidence of second marking and of detailed feedback on the cover sheets, but frequently no marking on the text, making it difficult for students to easily relate feedback on the cover sheet to specific content or grammatical errors in the text. Some cover sheets were being piloted from the archaeology programme and the team noted that the use of the boxes for deductions from marks were not being consistently applied across the assessments within some modules where they were being piloted. The team encourages the programme team to pilot alternative methods of providing feedback in ways that are consistent in helping students to understand the assessment criteria being applied.

192 The assessed work seen by the audit team matched the expectations set out in the programme specification and on the basis of this evidence, and the external examiners' reports, the team considered that the standard of student achievement was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

193 The Psychology Undergraduate Handbook is divided into separate volumes specific to the different levels of the programme. It includes information about meeting the student's Personal Tutor, Student Support Units (see below) and changing subjects or programmes. Students confirmed that the handbook was useful for understanding the rules governing degree classification and condonation, but were less clear about re-sit rights. In the view of the audit team the Handbook is helpful to students in understanding the expectations placed on them for learning and assessment and their responsibilities.

194 The audit team noted that there did not appear to be a formal document trail or mechanism for ensuring appropriate staffing arrangements and thus the continued support of the School and University College for the learning resources required by a BPS accredited programme, but was reassured by the verbal

commitment of senior staff and by the provision of the School of Social Sciences Staffing Proposal 2005-06.

195 The students were enthusiastic about the learning resources and personal support they received on the programme. The tutors were accessible and the department was a small, cohesive and highly rated department. Students liked the Resources/Common room, the Study Packs which could be bought and which contained all the reading material for individual modules, the Student Support Units, in which students signed up to a self-determined group to which a tutor mentor was appointed, and the extra curricula activities of fortnightly speakers brought in from outside the programme.

196 Each student is assigned a Personal Tutor/Academic Adviser whom they meet on the first Wednesday of the first term. This is a voluntary system and is not monitored. Students said they would often informally consult individual module tutors for advice informally rather than their Personal Tutor. The programme team is encouraged to consider how the Personal Tutor system can best be developed and monitored as an effective resource for students.

197 The Psychology Department has developed a number of ways to support staff as a resource for students including a Learning and Teaching Portfolio which contains reports on staff development events, Learning and Teaching Support Network seminars, research reports, presentations and ideas and rationales for module changes and their evaluation. The audit team viewed this Portfolio as an example of enhancement. Similarly, there is a Tutor File which contains useful information for new staff and visiting speakers. New members of Psychology staff are assigned a mentor, and a project to develop Personal Development Planning for students has been developed by the Psychology Department.

198 There is no compulsory numeracy or literacy screening of students at induction to identify those who may need additional support for the quantitative elements of the programme. A self administered, voluntary numeracy and literacy test is available, through

which students can access central support. The programme team may wish to review the induction screening of students for numeracy skills to add to the other measures it has taken to further improve performance on the quantitative modules in the programme.

199 The Psychology Department does not have a Work Placement Group and employers are only involved with the department for validation of courses and visiting speakers. The audit team encourages the department to consider more actively the wider agenda of relating to the world outside through work placements, including summer placements, work-focussed assignments and work-based projects.

200 The audit team was provided with student module evaluation forms and Module Evaluation Summaries which include a summary of student feedback. There was evidence of changes being introduced into modules and appraisal of the effectiveness of those changes. However, both staff and students emphasised that there was a flow of feedback from students on an informal basis. SSSs also inform staff in addition to these questionnaires. The team can confirm that Psychology has received top ratings in all such surveys.

201 Minutes of the Staff/Student Programme Committees were available to the audit team. These meetings take place three times a year. Issues that have been raised include explaining plagiarism, feedback on examination performance for those who failed, encouragement to sign up for Study Support Units, an agreement that students who did not prepare for seminars would be asked to leave the seminar and timing of assignment feedback.

202 Students are encouraged to be programme representatives by lecturing staff. All the students that the audit team met knew of this system of representation but many students felt they would go directly to a lecturer if there was a problem. They thought that things did change behind the scenes as a result of their representation, but often the changes occurred after they had moved on. The students on the programme were informed of the programme committee meetings through individual emails

or at a lecture when the representative would inform them of the outcome.

203 Overall, the audit team found the quality of learning opportunities in psychology to be suitable for the programmes of study leading to the awards listed above and that the standards of the awards were appropriate to their location on the FHEQ.

Section 4: The audit investigations: published information

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

204 The audit team was able to review a wide selection of the information that the University College publishes about itself and its academic programmes. The sample provided included copies of prospectuses, student handbooks and a range of material available electronically. The accuracy and usefulness of the information were commented upon in the SWS and discussed in meetings with student representatives and with students in each of the DATs.

205 The SWS confirmed that, in deciding where and what to study, all students had looked at one of the University College's prospectuses and obtained information from at least one other source, which included the University College website. Several students confirmed that prior to the start of their course they had telephoned or emailed the University College and subsequently received the information they required. Students also spoke favourably about additional information provided at University College open days. Students were generally particularly positive about information available through the VLE and part-time students in particular commented on its value to them. From the SWS, and its discussions with students, the audit team came to the view that students, including those at partner colleges and those based at the Chute House Campus, are

generally satisfied with the accuracy and reliability of information provided to them by the University College.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

206 The audit team considered examples of the University College's electronic and printed information sources and found them to be accurate and comprehensive. The University College publishes different prospectuses designed to provide relevant information for undergraduates, postgraduates and part-time students and has developed a website which provides a comprehensive range of information relating to the University College, its structure and its programmes.

207 Detailed prospectus copy is provided by programme leaders and support staff. The corporate communication/marketing area subsequently provides an editorial function and final approval to progress to publication is the joint responsibility of the Dean of Programmes and Quality, the Vice Principal (Academic) and the Director of Student Recruitment and Marketing.

208 To meet the requirements set out in the HEFCE document 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance*, the University College has established an Information Provision Working Group through its ISC. In January 2005 the University College moved from a static website to a portal which allows users access to different levels of information. The University College intends that the responsibility for the accuracy and quality of the different levels of information within the system will lie variously with lecturers and Heads of School, and that externally accessible information will be the responsibility of the Director of Student Recruitment and Marketing.

209 The University College acted as a trial site for the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) Model Publication Scheme for the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This involved testing the Model scheme against the University College's requirements and reporting to JISC on

its suitability. Subsequently the Model Scheme was approved as appropriate for the HE sector. Additionally the University College has Records Management and Data Protection policies.

210 At the time of the audit, work was in progress to ensure that relevant information was placed on the website to comply with the requirements of TQI within the designated time scale. Some information was already in place, including the University College's Learning and Teaching Strategy, external examiner reports and validations and review reports from 2004-05. It was anticipated that programme specifications would be available on-line and linked to the TQI website by the end of the current academic year.

Findings

Findings

211 An institutional audit of the University College Winchester (the University College) was undertaken during the week 23 to 25 May 2005. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the University College's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility as a UK degree-awarding body. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Standing Conference of Principals and Universities UK, three discipline audit trails (DATs) were selected for scrutiny. This section of the report of the audit summarises the findings of the audit. It concludes by identifying features of good practice that emerged from the audit, and recommendations to the University College for enhancing current practice.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

212 The University College stated that the quality of its programmes is assured by the design and validation process, by systematic annual monitoring and through programme revalidation by means of periodic review. The University College's deliberative structures originate in its Academic Board which is responsible for the content of the curriculum and the validation and review of courses. Committee responsibility for the maintenance and enhancement of quality is overseen by the Academic Standards Committee (ASC), which works closely with the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), which monitors the University College Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy.

213 Each of the University College's four Schools has a Quality Committee (SQC) which implements University College processes of assurance, monitoring and review. Below them, Programme and Subject Committees are responsible for ongoing quality assurance at the point of programme delivery. The University College states that it has developed a committee structure which devolves operational responsibility to School level. Thus, Annual

Monitoring Reports (AMRs) are compiled at programme or subject level, using internal and external evidence, including the use of student feedback. AMRs are considered by SQCs and the ASC. The University College has instituted a check on the robustness of its annual monitoring procedures in the form of a 'random audit' by members of the ASC of one unit of annual review from each School.

214 The University College's processes for approval, monitoring and review of programmes are set out in its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook which is its main source of documentary guidance on programme design. The Handbook describes validation procedures and gives guidance on designing programmes of study. Validation Panels exercise delegated powers from the Academic Board through the ASC. External involvement is a key feature of the work of validation panels and they must include at least one member with relevant experience of industry, commerce, public service or the professions and the University College aims to appoint external representatives from a variety of backgrounds.

215 Programmes are currently revalidated on a five-year cycle, although the University College makes extensive use of a process of interim revalidation to cover changes to programmes which occur between initial validation and periodic revalidation. Student membership of programme committees is a feature of the revalidation process. At the time of audit, the University College was implementing revised procedures on a pilot basis. The aim was to reduce the complexity of the process and the duplication of paperwork while maintaining rigour and both external and student involvement in the process. The audit team examined these revised procedures and concluded that the pilot scheme was likely to meet its objectives.

216 Quality assurance for collaborative programmes is secured by ensuring that these programmes operate within the established curriculum development and quality assurance processes of the academic schools. The University College's involvement in this area is currently

limited, although considerable expansion is planned. It offers no distance-learning provision and, at the time of audit, collaborative activity was restricted to two programmes. The audit team was able to confirm that quality assurance arrangements were adequate and that programme approval processes are in line with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by the QAA. The University College will, however, wish to review its processes to ensure that it has systems in place to assure quality and standards during a period of expansion.

217 During the audit, the audit team scrutinised a wide range of documents relating to programme validation and review and to annual monitoring. From this study and also scrutiny of the proceedings of committees with responsibility for quality management at University College and school level and through its meetings with staff and students, the team was able to confirm that broad confidence can be placed in the effectiveness of the University College's current and likely future management of the quality of its programmes.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards

218 The self-evaluation document (SED) stated that the external examining system has three main purposes: to assist the University College in comparison of academic standards across the sector, to assist the University College in ensuring that its assessment processes are fair and to verify that the standards reached by its students are appropriate for the awards being made. The University College's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook indicates that the external examiner fulfils the roles of moderator of the examination process, calibrator of academic standards and, where appropriate, adjudicator on standards.

219 The University College's programme approval and revalidation mechanisms are rigorous and embed practices designed to ensure coherence and progression through a

programme of study. The University College has also ensured that generic assessment criteria are in place which take account of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*.

220 External examiners submit annual reports on a template which requires them to comment on the standards of the University College's awards, on student performance against assessment tasks and on the overall quality of the programmes examined. The University College makes extensive use of these reports. They are a key element in the annual monitoring process and SQCs have responsibility for ensuring that appropriate action has been taken in response to comments made. The University College's Quality Support Office analyses external examiner reports for any emerging common themes and it makes its senior managers aware of these. Constructive consideration of the views of external examiners is a responsibility which is carefully discharged at institutional, school and programme levels.

221 On the basis of the evidence available to it, the audit team concluded that the University College's arrangements for securing standards are effective. Although external examiners had made some adverse comments, particularly concerning the level at which Foundation Degrees had been set, the University College had responded constructively. The University College was also able to provide evidence of a range of beneficial changes which had been instituted in response to external examiner reports. The findings of the audit confirm that broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the University College's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for supporting learning

222 Students at the University College benefit from a wide range of learning support at institutional and School level through learning resources, academic and personal support, and staff development. The audit team found that in all these areas students considered that the

facilities available to them were appropriate for their programmes of study.

223 Students spoke enthusiastically about the personal and academic support available to them, and were very appreciative of the accessibility, flexibility and helpfulness of academic and support staff. Staff told the audit team that while all students were allocated a personal tutor at the beginning of their course of study, personal tutorials were carried out in response to student demand and there was some recognition that these systems relied on students taking the initiative in seeking help, and that there was currently no institution-wide mechanism for systematically monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of school systems.

224 The audit team was reassured by the range of student support in place at the University College, including coordination and central support for study skills, and a referral system managed by Student Services. Students with disabilities have confidential learning agreements drawn up by the Disability Coordinator, providing additional support for these students and the staff who teach them. Support for part-time students was found to be equivalent to that for their full-time peers, and the development of the University College's virtual learning environment (VLE) was felt by these students to help them to be part of the University College community. The team considered that these support systems, together with the provision of student common rooms fostered a cohesive staff/student environment, and was a feature of good practice and would encourage the University College to further enhance this support by considering the development of an institution-wide mechanism for systematically monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of processes at School level (see above, paragraph 121).

225 Some variability was found in the level of careers support given to students, with some strong departmental employer links and employability indicators, but some programmes giving rise to some student dissatisfaction on aspects of preparation for employment. The audit team encourages the Careers Service to

implement fully the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information and guidance* in a timely fashion and, together with the University College, develop a more universal and proactive approach to the employability of students.

226 The SED noted that there is ongoing concern about the provision of sufficient texts from reading lists, which the University College states is being addressed through a short-term loan system and improvement in the flow of information from tutors to ensure the correct numbers and loan categories are in place, at the right time. School liaison librarians work with staff and students in their specialist area, and the audit team's meetings with students revealed broad satisfaction with the University College library facilities and services and the resources support available for their programmes both on the King Alfred campus and at off-site locations. The student satisfaction survey 2003-04 confirmed that students were satisfied with the majority of issues relating to the library and related resources.

227 The audit team was impressed by the work of the Research and Knowledge Transfer (R&KT) Centre as a strong, supportive and well-focused facility, especially in its support for postgraduate research students and in the enhancement of a postgraduate research culture. Operating as a 'drop in centre', surgeries are held for research students, and there are scheduled sessions for research students to gather and provide support for each other. The postgraduate research students who met with the team were enthusiastic in their support for, and use of, the R&KT Centre. Research training for research students is offered flexibly and was found by students to be meeting its stated aims and outcomes.

228 The audit team was concerned that postgraduate research students who are registered for degrees at the University of Southampton had restricted access to the library facilities at the University in comparison to postgraduate research students at the University. While the team agreed with the institution that library facilities at the University College were sufficient to meet the needs of postgraduate research students, they remained

concerned that postgraduate research students might encounter some difficulties because of the current arrangements in respect of access to library, and especially book and journal, resources. The team encourages the University College to engage in discussions with the University of Southampton, with a view to seeing whether postgraduate research students registered for degrees at the University of Southampton can have access to that University's library facilities on the same basis as the University of Southampton's own students.

229 The SED emphasises that the main responsibility for assuring the quality of teaching through staff support and development is devolved to the Schools. The audit team found that this arrangement worked effectively as a supplement to a centrally provided programme of staff development activities in ensuring that all staff had equivalent access to appropriate support and development. The team was encouraged to learn of the benefits to the individuals and their schools of the learning and teaching awards, and would encourage the institution to continue to develop the potential benefits through the new fellowship scheme. The team considered that the University College's continuing development of the role of the learning and teaching coordinators and their effective integration into University College processes for the enhancement of quality was an example of good practice in the devolution of quality enhancement to Schools. The team formed the view that there was a good range of high quality staff development activity, and that the balance of central and devolved responsibilities ensured that staff development was both relevant and appropriate to institutional and staff needs.

230 The audit team learnt that peer observation was widely regarded as an informal process that happened as part of co-teaching and team teaching approaches, but that is not tracked or linked in a formal and structured sense to the development and enhancement of teaching practice. The team formed the view that peer observation was not currently being used effectively to identify and disseminate good practice nor to support staff development and review, and the team considered that it

would be desirable for the University College to carry through its proposals for review of peer observation of teaching, and to implement a programme of staff development for reviewers.

231 At the time of the audit, the University College had no overseas collaborative partnerships, but as part of its commitment to widening participation had formed a number of links with further education colleges in the region and was in the process of extending its range of collaborative provision. While there are relatively few students registered on collaborative programmes, the audit team noted that a number of induction and staff development opportunities had been provided for partner college staff, and encourages the University College to continue to do this and to monitor the effectiveness of this provision. Resource provision and coordination between the University College and its partners appeared to be effective. Initial difficulties encountered in achieving compliance with validation outcomes have now been satisfactorily resolved, and the team found that the University College's collaborative provision was appropriately targeted and consistent with the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*.

232 The University College's regional developments are overseen by a Regional Programmes Group which, until recently, had principally been concerned with operational issues. In view of the institution's stated intention to expand collaborative provision, the audit team encourages the University College to ensure that effective systems are in place at a strategic level to assure the quality and standards of its partnership programmes.

Outcomes of discipline audit trails

Drama/drama studies

233 The scope of the DAT was as follows:

- BA/Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) in Drama
- BA/DipHE in Drama Studies and
- MA/Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) in Theatre and Media for Development.

234 From its study of students' assessed work, and from discussions with students and staff, the audit team formed the view that the standard of student achievement in the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in drama and drama studies was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ. Assessment practices across the School were consistent with the university's policies and with the *Code of practice* relating to the assessment of students. Programme specifications were prepared for all programmes, and set out appropriate educational aims and outcomes, linked clearly to the teaching, learning and assessment methods.

235 Students in general spoke very favourably about both the teaching and the support available to them in their programmes, and were highly satisfied with the diversity of modules offered within their courses, and the broad range of skills that they were acquiring through the taught programme. This is supported by favourable reports from the external examiners. The students find their assessments fair and they understand their marks. However, the audit team would encourage the undergraduate programme teams to ensure consistency in the amount and timeliness of feedback to students on assessed work, and to make a clearer guide to degree classification available to students following the different pathways in drama and drama studies.

236 The audit team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for the programmes of study in drama and drama studies leading to the undergraduate and postgraduate awards.

Education studies

237 The scope of the DAT included programmes leading to the following awards:

- BA(Hons) Education Studies
- BA(Hons) Education Studies (Early Childhood)
- BA/BSc Combined Honours.

238 The programmes are located within the School of Education which additionally offers a

range of initial teacher education programmes. The programmes of study reflect the *Subject benchmark statement* for education studies. From its study of samples of assessed work, and from discussions with students and staff, the audit team formed the view that the standard of student achievement in the single and joint honours undergraduate degree programmes offered by the School of Education was appropriate to the titles of the awards and to their location in the FHEQ.

239 Students are well supported, and clear and comprehensive information is provided during all stages of the programme. Students particularly valued the clarity of the information relating to assessment. There are ample opportunities for students to provide feedback on the quality of their learning experience and the audit team found several examples where students' views had contributed positively to the development of the programmes. This formal structure is complemented by a positive and open working relationship between students and the education studies programme team which results in an ongoing expression of student opinion to which staff respond positively. This enables some issues raised by students to be dealt with swiftly and without the necessity for recourse to more formal procedures.

240 The audit team concluded that the quality of the learning opportunities available to students was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the named awards.

Psychology

241 The scope of the DAT was as follows:

- BA Single Honours in Psychology
- BA Combined Honours in Psychology main pathway, joint pathway and subsidiary pathway.

242 The single honours and combined honours main pathway are accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS) with eligibility for Graduate Membership of the Society and with the Graduate Basis for Registration.

243 The programme specification for these programmes set out appropriate learning outcomes developed in the light of the

appropriate subject benchmark and the BPS syllabus and have been mapped against them.

244 From its study of marked and moderated work, external examiners' reports and from discussion with students and staff, the audit team found that the standard of student achievement is appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ. There was, however, generally a lack of assessment criteria specific to the module assignments in module handbooks or marking guidelines. Students expressed concern about the level of difficulty of some second-year modules and the external examiner was concerned about performance rates of some level 2 modules. The subject is therefore advised to revisit the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* and the FHEQ.

245 Student evaluation of the programmes and the Department was generally very positive. The audit team formed the view that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable to the programmes and pathways of study leading to the named awards above.

The use made by the institution of the Academic Infrastructure

246 The SED stated that all University College processes retain either an explicit or an implicit relationship with the Academic Infrastructure. Programmes are required to refer to the FHEQ and relevant subject benchmark statements in validation and review. The University College also produces policy and regulatory documents which engage with those elements of the *Code of practice* which operate more effectively at institutional level. The University College's Learning and Teaching Strategy requires programme teams to take account of relevant external requirements, including the expectations of employers and external agencies.

247 The audit team inspected a number of programme specifications and noted that these made use of subject benchmark statements. Some specifications had been explicitly designed to be accessible to a student audience but the team found that programme specifications did not consistently refer to FHEQ.

248 The audit team's scrutiny of documentation confirmed that the University College had made careful use of key external reference points. Attention has been paid to all sections of the *Code of practice*, including those sections which had recently been revised. It concluded that the University College's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure both at institutional and School level has been generally appropriate. However, the University College may wish to consider encouraging greater engagement with FHEQ at programme level as part of its ongoing process of setting and maintaining standards.

The utility of the SED as an illustration of the institution's capacity to reflect upon its own strengths and limitations, and to act on these to enhance quality and standards

249 The SED provided a useful description of the key officers, documents, main committees and quality assurance processes of the University College. It was supported by reference to additional documentation provided initially on CD-ROM and in hard copy, and at the audit team's visits to the institution. The University College frankly identified a number of areas of its own limitations in the SED and the audit team noted that while it was able to critically self evaluate at institutional level, it was less forthcoming in appraising the timeliness of its action plans. This lack of critical evaluation in its expeditiousness was reflected at School level in some areas.

250 The audit team found the SED to be generally clear, although some terminology which has been commented on in the text above was rather loosely applied leading to misinterpretation over the nature of practices in the University College.

251 The SED was comprehensive in coverage, accurate in assessment of the institution's limitations and identified and reflected on those areas where improvement is needed or underway. Overall, the SED supported confidence in the University College's capacity for reflection and self-evaluation.

Commentary on the institution's intentions for the enhancement of quality and standards

252 The SED states that the University College's LTC and its ASC have a shared responsibility for the enhancement of quality and standards. The University College aims to strike an appropriate balance between ownership and responsibility at School and programme level and the need for consistency across the University College.

253 The key purpose of the University College's Learning and Teaching Strategy is stated to be to enrich the student experience through the ongoing development of excellence. The University College is able to point to a number of enhancement activities in recent years, including the requirement to articulate engagement with key skills at validation or programme review, the development of a training programme for new teaching staff and the establishment of a VLE to support e-learning. It has also developed Guidance for Work-Based Learning and Personal Development Plans, although the University College has been disappointed at the slow pace of change in this latter area. The University College's LTC has promoted enhancement by creating a number of Fellowships for staff who wish to develop innovative teaching projects.

254 The audit team was able to examine a number of initiatives designed to enhance quality and standards. It considered that the School Learning and Teaching Coordinators played an effective role in identifying and disseminating good practice and it concluded that the University College places considerable emphasis on enhancement. The team does, however, feel that more work needs to be done in the area of peer observation of teaching. It feels that the expectations of peer observation need clearer articulation. It advises the University College to take action on the findings of a survey of peer observation by ensuring that an effective and consistent system is put in place.

Reliability of information

255 At the time of the audit, the University College was alert to the requirements set out in HEFCE's document 02/15, *Information on quality and standards in higher education*, and to the implications of HEFCE's document 03/51: *Final guidance*, and was moving in an appropriate manner to fulfill its responsibilities in this respect. Consequently, the University College is confident that it will be able to meet the requirements set out in HEFCE 03/51 for the publication of teaching quality information. Much of this information is already available, and an Information Provision Working Group has been established to monitor issues of compliance, and in particular to prepare for the submission of the full range of information.

256 The audit team considered examples of the University College's electronic and printed information sources and found them to be accurate and comprehensive. The students' views on published materials were provided in the Students' Written Submission, and also gained through meetings with students as part of the DATs, and meetings with other student groups. On the basis of the information to which it had access, the team concluded that the majority of students appear to be satisfied with the information available to them, and that broad confidence can be expressed in the accuracy and reliability of the information the University College publishes about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards.

Features of good practice

257 The following features of good practice were noted:

- i the articulation of the University College's strategic direction and its management of change (paragraphs 36 and 37)
- ii the work of the R&KT Centre, especially in its support for postgraduate research students and in the enhancement of a postgraduate research culture (paragraphs 42, 115, 131, 133 and 134)

- iii the development of the role of Learning and Teaching Coordinators and their effective integration into University College processes for the enhancement of quality (paragraph 101)
- iv the accessibility and supportiveness of staff in their pastoral and academic relations with students, including those in the part-time mode (paragraph 128)
- v the role of senior students in induction and in enhancing the resident student experience (paragraph 138).

Recommendations for action

258 Recommendations for action that is advisable:

- i give priority to ensuring that its data processes are fit for purpose, appropriately targeted and consistently used both centrally and across the Schools to support its learning and teaching strategy (paragraphs 89-91, 159 and 177)
- ii develop such guidance on the peer observation of teaching as will ensure that a shared and clearly understood system is put in place which is designed to secure further the quality of the learning experience (paragraph 102).

259 Recommendations for action that is desirable:

- i ensure greater engagement, at programme level, with the FHEQ in order to assist staff in the setting and monitoring of standards (paragraphs 72-73 and 190)
- ii ensure that the University College has effective systems in place to assure the quality and standards of its collaborative and its off-site provision during a period of substantial planned expansion (paragraphs 47, 145, 147 and 151)
- iii consider strategies to increase the validity and reliability of feedback from students to the institution (paragraphs 82, 84 and 86).

