

**Trinity and
All Saints College**

MAY 2003

Institutional audit

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Preface

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the Agency) 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 the Agency carries out reviews of individual HE institutions (universities and colleges of HE). In England and Northern Ireland this process is known as institutional audit. The Agency 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 the Agency 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 the Agency 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 02/15 *Information on quality and standards in higher education* published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The audit team reviews progress towards meeting this requirement.

Contents

Summary	1	Section 3: The audit investigations: discipline trails and thematic enquiries	14
Outcome of the audit	1	Discipline audit trails	14
Features of good practice	1	Section 4: The audit investigations: published information	16
Recommendations for action	1	The students' experience of published information and other information available to them	16
Summary outcomes of discipline audit trails	1	Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information	17
National reference points	2	Findings	20
Main report	4	The effectiveness of institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes	20
Section 1: Introduction: Trinity and All Saints College	4	The effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards	21
The institution and its mission	4	The effectiveness of institutional procedures for supporting learning	21
Mission statement	5	Outcomes of discipline audit trails	22
Background information	5	The use made by the institution of the academic infrastructure	23
The audit process	5	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	23
Developments since the previous academic quality audit	5	Commentary on the institution's intentions for the enhancement of quality and standards	23
Section 2: The audit investigations: institutional processes	6	Reliability of information	24
The institution's view as expressed in the SED	6	Features of good practice	24
The institution's framework for managing quality and standards, including collaborative provision	6	Recommendations for action	24
The institution's intentions for the enhancement of quality and standards	7	Appendix	
Internal approval, monitoring and review processes	7	The College's response to the audit report	25
External participation in internal review processes	8		
External examiners and their reports	9		
External reference points	9		
Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies	9		
Student representation at operational and institutional level	10		
Feedback from students, graduates and employers	10		
Progression and completion statistics	11		
Assurance of quality of teaching staff, appointment, appraisal and reward	11		
Assurance of quality of teaching through staff support and development	12		
Learning support resources	12		
Academic guidance, support and supervision	13		
Personal support and guidance	13		

Summary

An audit team from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the Agency) visited Trinity and All Saints College (the College) from 12 to 16 May to carry out an institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide information on the quality of the opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards that the College offers on behalf of the University of Leeds, which formally awards the degrees.

To arrive at its conclusions the audit team spoke to members of staff throughout the College, to current and former students, and it read a wide range of documents relating to the way the 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 and effective teaching, support 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 College is that:

- broad confidence can be placed in the College's current and future management of the quality of its programmes; and
- broad confidence can be placed in the College's present and likely future capacity to manage effectively the academic standards of the awards.

Features of good practice

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

- the use of the intranet as a means of communication of information to staff and students;
- the operation of student-staff academic committees (SSAC);
- the use made of staff and student surveys in the assurance and enhancement of quality and standards;
- the use of the Agency's reference points in the College's quality assurance procedures;

- the development of systematic and integrated student support arrangements;
- the self-critical and inclusive approach used by the College to prepare the institutional self-evaluation document as an indication of its capacity for effective self-evaluation; and
- the meticulous implementation and monitoring of the external examining process and procedures.

Recommendations for action

The audit team also found a number of matters where the College might benefit from further action. These matters are:

- building on its existing external engagements with the higher education (HE) sector and incorporating this greater externality into its management of quality and academic standards;
- considering, in the context of its current review of faculty quality and standards committees, means by which the discharge of the responsibilities of these committees might be rendered more transparent and consistent across the College with particular reference to their role in the annual monitoring process;
- to formalise training for student representatives to achieve the clear potential of SSACs as a significant contributor to the management of quality and standards.

Summary outcomes of discipline audit trails

Management/Media/History

To arrive at these conclusions, the audit team spoke to staff and students, and was given information about the College as a whole. The team looked at the following areas of provision: Management; Media; and History, to find out how well the College's systems and procedures were working at the discipline level. The College provided the team with documents, including student work and, here too, the team spoke to staff and students. As well as supporting the overall confidence statements given above, the team considered that the standard of student achievement in the three programme areas was appropriate to the title of the award and its place in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*, published by the Agency. The team considered the quality of the learning opportunities available to students was suitable for a programme of study leading to the award of BA (Single/Joint Honours) Management; BA (Joint Honours) Media; BA (Honours) History.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support the findings, the audit team also investigated the use made by the College of the academic infrastructure which the Agency has developed on behalf of the whole of UK HE. 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 the College was making appropriate use of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by the Agency, the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and programme specifications. The College has embedded these developments in a timely and comprehensive manner into its management of quality and standards.

From 2004, the Agency's audit teams will comment on the reliability of the information about academic quality and standards that institutions will be required to publish, which is listed in the Higher Education Funding Council for England's document 02/15, *Information on quality and standards in higher education* (HEFCE's document 02/15). The College is alert to the requirements set out in HEFCE's document 02/15, and was taking steps to move to fulfil its responsibilities.

Main report

Main report

1 An institutional audit of Trinity and All Saints College (the College) was undertaken during the week commencing 12 May 2003. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the College's management of its quality and standards, including the quality of the development and delivery of programmes of study leading to awards of the University of Leeds (the University).

2 The audit was carried out using a process developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the Agency) 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 the Agency at the request of UUK and SCOP, and universal subject review, undertaken by the Agency 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 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; for publishing reliable information; and for the discharge of its responsibilities for the award of degrees from the University. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with HEFCE, SCOP and UUK, the audit included consideration of examples of institutional processes at work at the level of the programme, through discipline audit trails (DATs). The scope of the audit encompassed all of the College's provision leading to awards for which it is responsible.

Section 1: Introduction: Trinity and All Saints College

The institution and its mission

4 The College is an independent Roman Catholic foundation originally founded in 1966 as two Catholic teacher training colleges on the same site: Trinity for women and All Saints for men. The two colleges merged in 1980. In 1991, the College was designated a College of the University, with which institution the College established a formal accreditation agreement in 2001. The campus is situated in Horsforth, some six miles from the centre

of Leeds. The 42-acre campus site includes nine halls of residence; a Students' Union building; the new Andrew Kean Learning Centre (in use since January 2003); and sports facilities.

5 The College is currently delivering a range of single and joint honours undergraduate programmes as well as taught masters and postgraduate diploma and certificate programmes leading to University awards. In addition, a small number of students in the College are studying for University research degrees (MPhil and PhD) under joint supervision arrangements.

6 At the time of the audit visit, almost all of the College's 2,055 undergraduates were full-time, as were two-thirds of its 449 postgraduate students. Some two-thirds of its students were female. Around 60 per cent of students were on programmes involving media, management, marketing and sports-related subjects. Some 40 per cent of the student population was over 21 years of age.

7 The College has been organised since 1999-2000 into four faculties: Arts and Social Sciences; Education; Management; and Media. Each faculty is led by its Dean, to whom heads of subject and/or directors of programme are responsible for the delivery of the relevant academic provision. In addition to the single and joint honours programmes within faculties, there are a number of inter-faculty joint honours programmes.

8 The distinctiveness of the College lies in its 'ethos that recognises its Catholic heritage', albeit in the context of inclusiveness and its predominantly vocational orientation, including teacher training. All undergraduates undertake a 'professional attachment' or placement in their second year and all first-year undergraduates either experience an outside professional attachment or an on-campus work-related module. Another characteristic of the College's learning experience is its aim to engage its students with issues of ethics and values in all appropriate curricular contexts.

9 There had been significant management restructuring under the current Principal, who is the chief executive responsible to the Board of Governors, since 1998. The Senior Management Team (SMT) consists of the Principal and four assistant principals, each with responsibility for specific areas of activity: Academic; Resources; Registrar; Finance and Personnel. Recent appointments include a Director of Development and a Director of Learning and Teaching.

Mission statement

10 The Mission Statement of the College states that 'Trinity and All Saints is called to be a community for higher education (HE) in the Catholic tradition:

- committed to learning, teaching, scholarship and care;
- inspired by Christian ideals and principles of inclusiveness;
- informed by charity, justice and prayer'.

Background information

11 The published information available for this audit included:

- the report of a quality audit of the College by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) (November 1996);
- the report of a HEFCE quality assessment report of Communications and Media Studies (November 1997);
- the report of an Agency subject review of psychology (November 1999);
- the report of an Agency subject review of hospitality, leisure, recreation, sport and tourism (October 2000);
- the report of an Agency subject review of theology and religious studies (November 2001).

12 The College provided the Agency with:

- the College's undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses;
- an institutional self-evaluation document (SED);
- a discipline self-evaluation document (DSED) for each of the three areas selected for the DATs;
- its Accreditation Agreement 2001, Corporate Plan 2000, Operating Statement 2002-03, External Examiners' Handbook for undergraduate provision 2002-03, External Examiners' Handbook for postgraduate provision 2002-03, and Student Handbook 2002-03.

13 During the audit visit, the audit team was given ready access to the College's internal documents, many of which were available through the intranet.

The audit process

14 Following a preliminary meeting at the College in August 2002, the Agency confirmed that three DATs would be conducted during the audit visit. The audit team decided that the DATs would focus on BA (Single/Joint Honours) Management, BA (Joint Honours) Media and BA (Honours) History.

15 The Agency received the College's SED in January 2003 and its DSED for BA (Single/Joint Honours)

Management, BA (Joint Honours) Media and BA (Honours) History, in February 2003. The SED was written specifically for the purposes of the audit and the DSEDs for History and Management were written as part of the College's routine internal review processes. The DSED for Media was produced specifically for the purposes of the audit.

16 The audit team visited the College on 12 and 13 March, to explore with the Principal, senior members of staff and student representatives matters relating to the management of quality and standards raised by the SED and other documentation provided for the team. At the close of the briefing visit a programme of meetings for the audit visit was developed by the team and agreed with the College.

17 At the preliminary meeting for the audit, the students of the College were invited, through their Union of Students (TASCUS), to submit a separate document (the student written submission (SWS)) expressing views on the student experience at the College, and identifying any matters of concern or commendation about the quality of programmes and the standard of awards. The TASCUS decided that it would not provide a separate submission to audit. This was a decision based upon very close involvement of the TASCUS at all stages in the development and submission of the institution's SED.

18 The audit visit took place from 12 to 16 May 2003 and included further meetings with staff and students of the College. The audit team was Professor B Brown, Mr P Griffiths, Dr R Morgan-Tamosunas, Dr R A H Robinson, auditors, and Mr K Hodgson, audit secretary. The audit was coordinated for the Agency by Dr J Ellis, Assistant Director, Reviews Group. The team is grateful to all those who made themselves available to assist it with its enquiries.

Developments since the previous academic quality audit

19 Before the present audit, the College participated in the HEQC quality audit in 1996. This commended a number of the College's arrangements including its approach to externality in quality assurance; aspects of the validation process; its introduction of student-staff academic committees (SSAC); and a personal tutor system. The recommendations that the College was asked to consider included clarifying student use of University library facilities; enhancing further the dissemination of good practice across the College; and improving staff support.

20 The audit team noted a number of changes, some major, since 1996 including the reorganisation of the College into four faculties which has led to greater devolved responsibility; the creation of faculty quality and standards committees (FQSCs); and the recent introduction in each faculty of learning and teaching coordinators and recruitment and retention coordinators. The College has also introduced improved induction and mentoring arrangements for new lecturing staff as well as college-wide peer observation of teaching.

21 The College has been subject to three subject reviews and one quality assessment since 1996. The reports of these subject reviews considered the provision to be 'approved'. Since 1997, the College has also had 18 Office for Standards in Education inspections of initial teacher training; an accreditation visit from the University; assessment for the award of Investors in People; and accreditation visits from the British Psychological Society (BPS), the Broadcast Journalism Training Council and the National Council for the Training of Journalists.

22 The audit team noted that, through its internal committee structures, the College had given careful and serious consideration to the content of these reports and it has responded positively and thoroughly to enhance its procedures in response to suggestions made in the reports.

Section 2: The audit investigations: institutional processes

The institution's view as expressed in the SED

23 In the SED, the College describes its arrangements for the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of awards. The SED had been prepared by a small steering group which had routinely involved all sections of the College through regular briefings and by providing opportunities for debate. The steering group included student representation and the document had also been shared, through its development, with the University.

24 The SED gave a clear description of quality assurance arrangements and a thorough evaluation of their effectiveness, and the audit team found this self-critical approach, and the clear intention to learn from practice, to be evident throughout its visit. The document identified elements of strength but was also open about those areas of the College's current practice that it had identified as requiring further improvement or enhancement. The team noted with

interest that the quality of analytical reporting by the College had been previously commended in Agency subject review and that the University, in consideration of its accreditation arrangements, had also identified this evaluative approach as being a feature of documentation prepared by the College. In its meetings with staff and its review of additional documentation, the team formed the view that this self-critical and inclusive approach was characteristic of the College and wished to cite this as an example of good practice.

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

25 The College SED described its arrangements for the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards as being fit for purpose and designed to meet relevant external requirements and expectations. The College's framework for managing quality and standards is supported by a SMT; the Principal is supported by four assistant principals, each of whom carries responsibilities for specific functions and departments, and the recent appointment of a Director of Development to assist in a 'more proactive strategic approach' to programme development. Four deans now manage faculties which have 'enabled greater devolution of budgets, staff development and quality management'. The College is described as being committed to this progressive devolution of responsibility to faculty level while maintaining institutional oversight.

26 The Academic Board, Academic Standards Committee (ASC) and Course Validation Committee (CVC) are key elements of the institutional framework for the management of quality and standards. The Academic Board is described in the SED as being the forum for determination of overall policy, with ASC having responsibility for periodic review of quality and standards and CVC taking responsibility for consideration of new provision and major modifications. Following the establishment of the four faculty structure, the Academic Board considered that, to enhance a local sense of ownership, each faculty should establish a FQSC with a remit for 'all matters relating to the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards'.

27 The Quality Support Unit, which collects and disseminates data and communicates information regarding relevant policies and procedures, provides support for all aspects of the quality assurance arrangements. There is also a Quality Assurance Document Directory, available on-line and in hard

copy, which contains the detailed evaluation, monitoring, review and validation procedures of the College.

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

28 In the SED, the College identified issues that it intends to address to enhance the quality of provision and the standards of awards. Issues included: continuing to develop the independent perspective afforded by external review; monitoring the recently introduced arrangements for periodic review through internal audit; further consolidating the elements of the academic infrastructure into the fabric of the College's framework for maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards; monitoring the impact of the appointment of the retention and recruitment coordinators; further devolving responsibilities to faculty level while maintaining appropriate oversight at institutional level;

29 Other areas identified by the College to enhance the management of quality and standards included: completing its review of the work of the FQSCs; monitoring the end of year reviews at faculty level; further developing its analysis of the Student Satisfaction Survey; completing its review of the professional attachment programme; monitoring the contribution made by the faculty learning and teaching coordinators to the identification and dissemination of good practice.

30 The audit team noted that many of these issues had been developed with the guidance of the Assistant Principal (Academic) and the Director of Learning and Teaching and had been flagged up across the College, with many reviews already in progress. Very few of the issues raised were not already the subject of some form of review at the time of the audit and it is a testament to the College's current maturity that it is so clearly intent on continuing to learn from practice. The team considered that these planned actions would make a useful contribution to the College's processes and operational practices for assuring the quality of programmes and enhancing the learning opportunities available to students.

Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

Programme approval

31 The College has produced procedures, which are reviewed annually, for the design and approval of its provision. Proposals to the CVC are accompanied by confirmation from the Assistant

Registrar (Quality Support) that the relevant procedures have been followed and the documentation is appropriate for presentation to the Committee. The procedures are detailed and the Quality Support Unit plays an important part in providing guidance in the preparatory stages. The College has recently agreed, with the full support of the University, to streamline the processes it uses for the consideration of major modifications to programmes, with the intention of rationalising some of the 'excessively demanding' procedures. The audit team noted that such changes were only agreed where there was continued guarantee of the maintenance of standards. This careful approach to the design and approval of its provision has received recognition and commendation from the University, where the implementation of these procedures has been described as exemplary.

32 The SED described how the University plays an important role in providing oversight for the implementation of the College's procedures. The long-standing collaborative arrangements culminated in an agreement, in 2001, between the College and the University. The agreement defined the College's accredited status and continued approval for the College to develop and deliver programmes leading to awards of the University. The current agreement is, in the first instance, in force until July 2007.

33 The effectiveness of the operational arrangements between the University and the College are described as having 'in general, worked well' with the accreditation agreement having led to improved communication and greater clarity of respective responsibilities. Although there were some further improvements to the collaborative arrangements to which the College was continuing to contribute, the audit team largely agreed with the view of the University, as expressed in the report of the review meeting held in 2003, that 'the agreement had proved very successful in providing a helpful sharpening to the rigour of the processes between the two institutions which now operated with clearly documented and appropriate procedures and lines of communication'.

Annual monitoring

34 The SED reported on the College's annual review process. The College routinely monitors a wide range of information and data through the operation of its ASC and FQSC. These monitoring and review processes include scrutiny of external examiners' reports, statistical data, information relating to the student experience and the annual review of the relationship with the University.

The annual review procedures have also been recently expanded to enable all sections of student services to present individual reports to the SMT. At faculty level, the FQSCs consider proposals for curriculum changes and the impact of external developments on the design and operation of programmes at the subject level. The College has indicated that, with effect from 2002-03, FQSCs should consider the outcomes of end-of-year reviews of provision undertaken by course teams.

Periodic review

35 The SED described how the College has developed a new system for quadrennial periodic review based on an internal audit of provision. The rationale was considered by Academic Board which agreed that this periodic review would need to operate 'within a broader framework whereby the quality and standards of provision would continue to be monitored by the ASC on an annual basis'. The College intends that, in terms of the interface with annual monitoring, periodic review should span a longer period to permit an identification of trends. The method of periodic review employed by the College had been developed in collaboration with the University and was based upon a similar arrangement in operation at the University. To ensure that these revised procedures were implemented effectively, the College had initiated a programme of staff development for its auditors in collaboration with the University. The audit team formed the view that this change to the College's review processes was built upon a thorough evaluation of previous practice.

36 The audit team found that the work of the ASC, in its routine monitoring of a wide range of data and information, was a clear safeguard for the College in its intentions to maintain and monitor the quality and academic standards of its work. The FQSCs routinely considered external examiners' reports and action to be taken, reports from SSACs, proposed changes in curricula and a range of other issues generally stimulated by developments in the wider HE sector. Some annual reviews of subjects were also considered, but the team found that there was some lack of transparency in the ways in which each of the FQSCs operated in this regard and the information that subsequently passed through to the ASC as a result of this scrutiny was consequently somewhat inconsistent. The College had already recognised this issue and is in the process of reviewing the operation of the FQSCs and their interface with ASC and CVC. In light of this planned review, the team would encourage the College to consider means by which the FQSCs might

discharge their responsibilities more transparently and consistently with particular reference to their role in annual monitoring.

External participation in internal review processes

37 The accreditation agreement between the University and the College requires that there is University representation throughout the review and approval mechanisms of the College, and this is supported by the work of University subject representatives (USRs) and University committee representatives. The accreditation agreement brought with it some significant changes to the ways in which the USRs in particular now operate within the College. USRs previously acted as second markers for a proportion of assessed work before its submission to external examiners. Because of the accreditation agreement, USRs are no longer directly involved with the assessment of student work, although they continue to be consulted on issues relating to the design and validation of provision. The SED indicates that 'there is still work to do to ensure that all USRs have a clear and accurate understanding of a role that has been subject to significant and ongoing modification'. While this remains essentially a matter for the University, the audit team was reassured, through its meeting with USRs, that such clarification as was necessary has taken place and that the contribution made by USRs continues to be highly valued by the College.

38 One significant benefit of the collaboration with the University is the confidence it has provided for the College to continue the expansion of its external network. Following the use of external members in a review of education, the University 'felt this was a very welcome development and encouraged the College to develop this further'. The subsequent involvement of external specialists, as a matter of course, in the College's internal audit procedures appeared to the audit team to be entirely in line with the advice provided by the accrediting body. The shift towards greater externality was described by the College as being 'an increasingly important element' of its work, and the team noted a number of examples of the College benchmarking its academic and support provision against the wider HE sector. The team was confident that the College was making appropriate use of external participants in the full range of its quality assurance processes. The College may find it desirable to continue to build upon this engagement with the HE sector and on the increased externality recently incorporated into the management of quality and academic

standards by increasing the use of independent external membership of panels and audit teams in validation and review.

External examiners and their reports

39 The SED highlighted the systematic and scrupulous consideration of reports from external examiners as one of the distinguishing characteristics of the College's framework for the assurance and enhancement of quality and standards. External examiners are appointed with the approval of the Chair of the ASC and the University Representative on ASC.

40 An external examiners' handbook sets out the appointment procedure and external examiners' responsibilities for ensuring the compatibility of academic standards. External examiners' reports are considered by the Chair of Panel of Examiners, Dean of Faculty, Assistant Principal (Academic) and the Principal, and by the appropriate FQSC and ASC. In their annual reports external examiners are also required to comment to the University Senate through the College ASC and Learning and Teaching Board of the University.

41 The reports examined by the audit team, in conjunction with the samples of assessed work, consistently confirmed the rigour and effectiveness of the College's assessment procedures and criteria, and the rigorous standards of its awards, both in terms of the national frameworks, and in relation to comparable awards at other HE institutions. From the documented and oral evidence available, the team concluded that there are in place meticulous and robust processes which enable the College to derive maximum benefit from their external examiners, and the team consider these to be an example of good practice.

External reference points

42 The SED describes how the College's framework for the assurance and enhancement of quality and standards ensured 'systematic consideration by relevant staff and through the committee structure' of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject benchmark statements and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*, published by the Agency, to embed them within course design, approval and review. The audit team considered that a notable feature of the review and approval procedures was the way in which external reference points had been embedded into the

routine procedures of the College in recent years. For example, external examiners are required to report regularly on how the College has considered the purposes of the reference points, reflected on its own practices and make, if necessary, any appropriate changes. The evidence available to the team indicated that the College has taken ownership of the academic infrastructure at all levels, embedding its principles within institutional and discipline practices at all levels.

43 The College has approached each section of the *Code of practice* in a systematic way through appropriate committees reporting to Academic Board, identifying any areas requiring action. Professional Attachments, a distinctive feature of the College's provision, are under ongoing review in the light of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Placement learning*. The College has established an action plan identifying proposed enhancements with target dates for completion.

44 The College had also approved a template for the production of programme specifications as part of its review of its approval procedures. In so doing, the College 'signalled its intention to undertake a phased approach to the production of programme specifications'. The *FHEQ* was a prominent feature of approval procedures with Academic Board having decided to approve a set of related descriptors for all of the College's awards. The audit team noted the explicit use of the *FHEQ* in meetings of the CVC where proposals were being considered for approval. Subject benchmark statements are also now used as part of the routine approval procedures.

45 The audit team noted the ways in which the College has drawn carefully upon the Agency's external reference points, including the *Code of practice*, the *FHEQ* and subject benchmark statements in reviewing its practices; and the subsequent incorporation of these practices into its standard quality assurance procedures. The team considered the College's use of the reference points as an example of good practice.

Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies

46 The SED described how the College had analysed the outcomes of subject reviews and had taken action to strengthen any identified areas of weakness. The audit team had the opportunity to examine in detail the ways in which the College had responded to the Agency subject review of theology and religious studies. This example provided considerable evidence that such reports are used, not

only as external indicators of quality and standards, but as significant opportunities for enhancement.

47 Relevant programmes are subject to accreditation by, among others, the BPS and various journalism councils. The audit team examined substantial documentation relating to the positive outcome of the BPS accreditation. This demonstrated that the College had contributed, through its Academic Board, to the accreditation application and that the implications of successful accreditation in terms of revised staffing levels and professional attachment requirements were being addressed with vigour. The team concluded that it was standard practice for the College to own both the positive elements and the implications for professional accreditation at institutional level, and to use the opportunities these bring for the greater benefit of the institution as a whole.

Student representation at operational and institutional level

48 The SED described how students are represented on the Board of the Governors, Academic Board, CVC and the ASC. At faculty level, SSACs have been developed to provide students with a formal representative structure. The SSACs are designed to ensure that the student body may have extensive opportunity to be involved in debating and contributing to all aspects of provision in both developmental and operational aspects.

49 The audit team heard how students commended the open and responsive culture throughout the College in both academic and support departments. Their opinion was valued and demonstrable action by the College resulted in positive changes about matters of academic quality, including, for example, timetabling issues and the consistency of academic feedback mechanisms.

50 The audit team would endorse the view expressed in the SED that the College's commitment to student consultation provides opportunities for the College to evaluate their programme and student experience. The team agreed that the College arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement are characterised by a strong emphasis upon student consultation within both formal and informal processes. The comparatively modest scale of the College allows for a high level of communication between the officers of the Students' Union and senior staff, and between students and academic and support staff, and the team concluded that student representation was well organised, reliable and effective.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

51 Formal arrangements for obtaining feedback include a comprehensive annual cycle of student surveys undertaken by the Quality Support Unit. Each of these sources of information has clear arrangements for institutional analysis and action, and contribute to a number of quality assurance procedures including module evaluation and internal audit.

52 The Quality Support Unit undertakes an Initial Induction Survey in early October focused upon level 1 students and investigates choice of establishment, pre-enrolment perceptions and feedback on the formal induction process. In December, a Welfare Survey of all students investigates accommodation, catering, student support services and finance, while the February-March Student Satisfaction Survey concentrates upon learning and teaching and learning resources. There are also module evaluation questionnaires, completed at the end of each module. These surveys are seen as important sources of information for the College and their results are well embedded in the evaluation processes at both institutional and operational levels. Response rates to the surveys are high and they are producing high quality quantitative and qualitative information. The audit team believes the College's use of student satisfaction surveys as sources of information in the management of quality and standards to be a feature of good practice.

53 All programmes of study are covered by an appropriately constituted SSAC, the remit for which includes consideration of any matters relating to academic provision. The minutes of these committees illustrate that they consider a range of issues including the results of the various questionnaires as well as those for module evaluation. The audit team was able to discuss the detailed operation of SSACs with students and staff. They concluded that their remit, (including an independent staff member from outside the Faculty) and democratic operation (which in most cases had resulted in students providing both Chair and Secretary) is an excellent model. The system works well, has demonstrable impact upon academic quality enhancement, and ensures that the College is well informed on student opinion. The team believes the College's use of SSACs in the management of quality and standards to be a feature of good practice.

54 The audit team recognised that the College had sought to ensure through the TASCUS that greater support and training might be given to enhance the student contribution to SSACs. The team believes the

College may find it desirable to formalise training for student representatives to realise fully the clear potential of SSACs as a significant contributor to the management of quality and standards.

Progression and completion statistics

55 The SED explained that routine monitoring at corporate level is undertaken by the ASC through an annual reporting cycle which considers a wide range of information and data. The form and content of these are kept under review by Academic Board through the ASC. Internal statistical indicators are provided annually by study area, permitting careful monitoring of recruitment, entry profile, retention and progression by programme. Emerging trends were noted and issues of concern were systematically followed up by appropriate managers, including the Chair. The SMT also carries out regular analysis of admissions data. Particular concerns about recruitment in modern languages, for example, had been the subject of a special review by Academic Board which informed the College's strategic decision-making process.

56 In 2000-01, the College established a Quality Support Unit, led by the Assistant Registrar (Quality Support), with responsibility, *inter alia*, for collecting, collating and disseminating information from module evaluation questionnaires and student satisfaction surveys. This facilitates review of statistical data in relation to evidence of the student experience. Performance in relation to national averages and HEFCE benchmarks reflects the College's commitment to widening participation, and is supported by the recent introduction of faculty recruitment and retention coordinators whose role, initially, will be to gather faculty good practice on tracking student progression.

57 Statistical and evaluative information is also scrutinised at faculty and subject level. Module-level assessment data, as well as student feedback, is analysed annually at subject level and in SSACs, and reported and reviewed at FQSCs which report to ASC.

58 On the basis of the documentation provided, the audit team found the quality and availability of statistical information to be adequate and effectively used to inform monitoring, analysis and strategic planning within the institution.

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

59 The SED claimed that the College recognised that its staff were its most valuable resource, and that the prime responsibility for assuring academic

standards rests with the lecturing staff and their skill, experience and professionalism. The College acknowledged that while it has in place secure planning arrangements to ensure that staffing levels are appropriate, it had experienced problems in making appointments to advertised vacancies. Policies are therefore in place, fully articulated through a robust Human Resources (HR) Strategy, to encourage a wider range of high-quality applicants, including enhanced relocation packages, and improved support provision for staff through the creation of family and emergency leave entitlements.

60 The quality of academic appointments is secured by appropriate membership of appointments panels, which include external members (normally from the University), improved selection processes (including the involvement of students), tests, and a rigorous focus upon selection against a person specification. In meetings with new staff it was clear that these policies were being implemented in a very professional manner, and that the experience of recruitment matched the policy expectations. Interview panels were also well briefed as to their roles and responsibilities, for example, in relation to equal opportunities. The audit team also considered the appointment of part-time staff. The team saw evidence to confirm that part-time staff received appropriate induction and were closely integrated into the College.

61 The College has probation periods for new staff (as appropriate and if recommended by appointment panels), and normally expects new staff with less than three years of teaching experience in HE to undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching offered by the University. A salary enhancement is offered to staff who successfully complete this programme. New staff are also assigned a departmental mentor. Meetings with staff confirmed that these arrangements were working and well understood.

62 The scale of the College means that the opportunities for promotion to senior posts are limited. The SED acknowledged this and related matters, and the HR Strategy sets out clear policies for providing other career development support designed to promote the retention of staff. This includes funding to support membership of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

63 There is a formal appraisal system which is linked closely to staff development within the contexts of both College strategic needs and individual aspirations. Meetings with staff indicated that the staff appraisal system was clearly understood, operated as planned, and was closely linked to the College's systems of support for staff development.

64 The audit team was assured that the policies and practices in the College provide the basis for the securing of high-quality staff recruitment and retention, and that the HR policy is an important component of the systems for assuring academic quality and standards.

Assurance of quality of teaching through staff support and development

65 The College has in place a clear policy on staff development, which the SED noted included systems for supporting scholarship and professional updating and a Research Leave Fund. Previous audit reports had commended good practice but the College had subsequently sought to make significant improvements to its arrangements. These include an extension of appraisal, formal management training for senior staff and a strategic approach to staff development covering all employees.

66 A comprehensive HR Strategy has been adopted and states that a cross-college training needs analysis in 1999-2000 forms the basis for developing the skills of all staff, channelled towards achieving the College's strategic objectives. The approach within the framework of expectation provided by Investors in People has enabled the College to address its needs through both a comprehensive in-house training programme and targeted individual training. The easy accessibility of a wide range of institutional support documentation in relation to staff development and personnel policy and practice on the College's intranet was a model of good practice reflective of the high quality of the intranet as a source of information and support for both staff and students. The audit team concluded that the College's use of the intranet as a means of communication of information to staff and students was a feature of good practice.

67 A further important College process for enhancing the quality of teaching was the Sharing Practice through Observation of Teaching scheme. This is a peer observation and support system introduced during the previous academic year, the intentions of which are developmental - the system is independent of the College's staff appraisal scheme, which may also include classroom observation. Discussion with staff, including those employed on a part-time basis, showed that this system was widely embedded and already resulting in positive improvements in teaching practice.

68 The audit team was able to conclude that the College's analysis of its approaches to staff development in support of the assurance of the

quality of teaching was accurate. The College clearly valued its staff and had developed sound approaches to providing support at an individual level but in a strategic context. The monitoring of the progress of the system at individual and corporate level was working, and good practice within the College was shared widely between faculties and departments, aided by the relatively small scale of the College.

Learning support resources

69 The development and delivery of learning resources is set from the College perspective within the Learning and Teaching Strategy and the Information Technology (IT) Strategy. Information Support Services is an integrated learning resource infrastructure which brings together the library, computer services and the web development service, and is closely articulated with the faculties. The most important new development is the Andrew Kean Learning Centre, completed in December 2002, which houses the library, IT facilities and study space of a high standard. This new facility complements other capital investment including a Media Centre and Management Centre.

70 The College's SED noted that responsibility for the allocation of resources to learning support rests with the SMT. An allocation system based largely upon student numbers, but including consideration of special requirements, has enabled the College to provide support in relation to identified needs. In meetings with staff it was clear that the resource allocation and management procedures used by the College were responsive and delivered within an efficient and cost-effective framework.

71 The audit team was able to note in meetings with students that there was generally a high level of satisfaction with resources for learning provided by the College. It was also clear in discussions with students that they made use of the University's library (at which they have borrowing rights) and that the College's sections of the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) system, Bodington Common, was playing a developing role in providing access to a wide range of electronic sources and specific programme-related material.

72 From summaries of recent student surveys, discussion with students during the DATs, and through discussions with support staff on resource allocation, the audit team was able to conclude that the College was providing good learning support opportunities for students, was undertaking effective monitoring of resource use, and was able to

demonstrate a responsive approach to solving both strategic and operational resource problems.

Academic guidance, support and supervision

73 A Personal Tutor System provides a first point of contact for academic and pastoral advice. The SED noted that there appeared to have been a comparatively high level of dissatisfaction with this system as reported, for example, in the Student Satisfaction Survey for 2001-02. Following this survey the ASC commissioned a full review which suggested a revised approach. From September 2002, therefore, a Progress Tutor system was introduced for first-year students, integrated with Personal Development Planning (PDP).

74 A comprehensive Progress Tutor Handbook (2002-03) has been produced to support staff in the new approach and this was examined by the audit team. Progress tutors and the PDP process are now nearing the end of the first year of their operation, and meetings with students and progress tutors indicated that although there were some occasional problems such as the difficulty of arranging meetings with tutors who were employed on a part-time basis, there was general agreement this new system was extremely effective. Through discussions with students the team concluded that students had excellent access to personal academic support and that academic staff were providing clear arrangements for access through timetabled periods of their personal availability. The scale of the College allowed the effective operation of an informal support system in which students had easy access to a range of academic advice. The team consider the development of systematic and interlocking support arrangements to be a feature of good practice.

75 Professional attachments are an important and distinctive feature of College provision. This provision requires considerable academic and practical support and is set within a validated set of modules which contribute credit to awards. The audit team was able to confirm by discussions with students the importance and value of these placements, but it was clear that there had been some internal operational problems, in part due to staffing shortages in the Employment Partnership Office. The team saw evidence to assure them that extensive discussion and management actions had taken place to remedy the problems.

76 Although its number of research students is small, the College has instituted a clear system for their support in academic matters and has a

Research Committee which reports to Academic Board to oversee arrangements. The Committee includes a member from the University. College and University staff jointly supervise all research students. Discussion with research students indicated that the level of support provided was good, and that the collaboration with the University provided the basis for high quality academic supervision.

Personal support and guidance

77 The College established the post of Director of Student Support Services in September 2001 to enhance the coordination and integration of already well-established individual student support services. Within the context of the former system of personal tutors and the new arrangements for progress tutors, roles which have both academic and personal support responsibilities, the College has a range of individual services dedicated to individual student needs. These are described in detail for all students in the Student Handbook, and include financial advice, a counselling service, disability service, a careers service and student health centre.

78 The audit team was also made aware by students of the important welfare support role played by the Chaplaincy, which works closely with the College services. The importance of hall wardens, who are senior students with specific responsibilities in each hall of residence, as 'front line' providers of advice and support, was also noted.

79 Each of the student support services makes a report to the Director of Student Support Services every semester, and an overview is provided to Academic Board each year. Considerable monitoring data is provided through the annual Welfare Survey of all students, and further information on the effectiveness of the services is gathered in the annual Student Satisfaction Surveys, information which is itself subject to analysis by various committees on a regular basis.

80 The College has developed its careers service with the intention of making it a more proactive and focused service for students. The College wants to provide career management as an integral, timetabled part of the curriculum. The Job Shop was seen as a valuable addition to the service, and careers staff noted that the recommendation to students to limit part-time work to 15 hours each week was designed to ensure a proper balance between academic work and the need to earn income.

81 In all its meetings with students the audit team found that they valued the support services, were aware of their resources, and were entirely satisfied

that the College provided a responsive and caring environment both for resident and non-resident, full and part-time students. The team was impressed by the College's clear commitment to the support of its students within an inclusive and supportive framework, and noted that further improvements in access to support services would result from the planned co-location of services due to take place within the current capital programme.

Section 3: The audit investigations: discipline trails and thematic enquiries

Discipline audit trails

82 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 reviews relating to the programmes.

Management

83 The DSED for programmes in management was an internal audit document prepared under a new College quality and standards procedure. The report was comprehensive in coverage, adopted a self-critical approach, and had been considered by an internal College audit team which included both University and independent membership. Both the internal audit and programme documentation indicated that the purposes and intentions of the *Code of practice* had been addressed in the design and development of the BA Management programme, and the College's policy was being followed in the rolling programme of producing programme specifications at the time of validation and course review.

84 The management programmes are designed to contribute to the College's mission by providing a distinct learning experience and in particular one that places the emphasis on a vocational learning experience. The programmes explore management practice and practical business issues, with professional attachments given a central role. The reports of the external examiners for the undergraduate programme note a high quality of student attainment and the module evaluation questionnaires indicate that students regarded the context and delivery favourably. The audit team were able to examine a wide range of assessed work from all levels of the programme, and noted the careful marking, helpful feedback to students on coursework, and clear double-marking within College policy.

85 The DSED explained how the FQSC had taken a considered view of the alignment of the existing undergraduate courses to the relevant external reference points. The audit team examined the course specifications and validation documents and was able to confirm that these were entirely appropriate. The general standard of student achievement was appropriate to BA (Single/Joint Honours) Management and the award's location within the *FHEQ*.

86 New students on the undergraduate programmes are provided with a comprehensive First Year Handbook, and detailed descriptions of each module are provided in both written form and on the web. These provide detailed information on content and assessment. Second and third-year handbooks are being prepared; however, discussion with students confirmed that the information provided was both appropriate and accurate, and students clearly understood their assessment and grading classification. There is also a well organised system of feedback to students which had a consistency of approach across all modules, and students felt that they had very good support in this and other course matters from the academic staff. Few students reported problems, but they knew how to access personal support and advice if it were required.

87 Key features of the management programmes at undergraduate level are the two professional attachments. These are organised within the College framework and for management students these had clearly been able to provide a very positive contribution to their personal and professional development. The work-related professional development which these placements provided had assisted student teams to be especially successful in external competition in recent years, illustrating the broad contribution to career preparation provided by placements.

88 The audit team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for the programme of study leading to the award of BA (Single/Joint Honours) Management.

Media

89 The Media DSED was a detailed and self-critical document prepared by the Dean of the Faculty in collaboration with the Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Tutor and in consultation with staff and students through the SSAC. The DSED encompassed the undergraduate Scheme of Study in Media within which students take BA Media programmes in combination with a choice of other subjects. The current programme was validated in

1999, undergoing significant change in 2001 and further minor modifications in 2003 within the context of the *Subject benchmark statement* for communication, media, film and cultural studies.

90 As confirmed by the external examiners, the objectives and content of the Media Scheme provision were consistent with both the *Subject benchmark statement* and the *FHEQ*. Programme specifications were not yet available for media programmes since the College was gradually introducing these as programmes become due for review and revalidation. The general standard of student achievement was appropriate to BA (Joint Honours) Media and the award's location within the *FHEQ*.

91 The DSED described the scheme as vocational and profession-orientated with a strong theoretical underpinning, and stressed the importance placed on the integration of theory and practice which was recognised by external examiners. Core Theory modules at all three levels provide a sound theoretical framework, and students are introduced to a range of media skills and practices within this critical context at level 1, with a choice of core preferences and options at levels 2 and 3. A wide range of learning activities is designed to develop academic, technical and transferable skills which are assessed in a variety of ways. Core modules are supported through the publication of lecture notes on the web-based Bodington Common VLE. Students valued the combination of staff academic and professional experience, with inputs from a range of media and production practitioners.

92 Learning is supported by a purpose-built Media Centre offering radio and TV production facilities. This is operated according to a student-centred access and use policy, the effectiveness of which was confirmed to the audit team in meetings with students and reflected in documentary evidence. Procedures are in place at faculty and college levels for capital resource planning and enhancement in the light of increasing student numbers and technological developments, as well as for related staff development; staff were aware of, and made use of, these mechanisms. Media students were generally satisfied with the library provision, although some access difficulties were reported at key assessment pressure points. However, a number of measures had been put in place to seek to ameliorate this situation, including short loan arrangements. Media students are also able to use the University library and now benefit from the newly-opened Andrew Kean Learning Centre.

93 Professional attachments at levels 1 and 2 are a key and mature feature of the scheme and a requirement for progression to levels 2 and 3. These are seen by staff and students as an opportunity to put theory into practice. Placement providers, College tutors and students clearly understood the purpose of the attachment and their relative responsibilities as a result of the clear documentation provided and contact with College tutors and the Employer Partnership Office. Both students and employers spoke very positively of the value of the attachments which frequently resulted in further placement and other employment opportunities, and providers generally found students to be of a high calibre.

94 Assessment requirements and criteria are set out in level and module handbooks provided to students, and also available on-line. The sample of marked and moderated student work seen by the audit team, confirmed the operation of robust assessment practices (including double-marking and feedback practices) which were also confirmed by external examiners. The assessed work available for examination, with external examiners reports, confirmed that the rigour and standards of assessment and performance are comparable with those of other institutions. Students expressed some misgivings, of which staff were aware, about the opportunity for their individual contribution to be fairly recognised in the operation and assessment of group work. This form of assessment was under ongoing active review and revision, and staff were aware of, and in some cases actively involved in, national debates about group work.

95 Module evaluation questionnaires were regularly used to elicit student feedback which was systematically reviewed at subject level and discussed at the Media SSAC. The important function and effectiveness of this forum for raising and debating issues within media was evident from the documentation available to the audit team and meetings with students and staff (see above, paragraphs 52, 53).

96 The audit team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for the programme of study leading to the award of BA (Joint Honours) Media in combination with a range of other available subjects.

History

97 The History DSED was the Annual Monitoring Report for History for the academic year 2001-02, routinely submitted to the FQSC of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. It also covered joint honours history programmes.

98 As the single honours history programme had recently undergone a major modification, the programme specification was made available as an annex to the DSED. It was set out according to an institutional template; was clearly written; and made explicit reference to faculty-level checking of its alignment with the *Subject benchmark statement* for history. Teaching staff whom the audit team met confirmed that the *Subject benchmark statement* and *FHEQ* had been considered in the monitoring and review of the programme.

99 The DSED made appropriate use of data on entrants, progression and completion for single honours. As an example of an annual monitoring report, the DSED was comprehensive in scope, thorough in execution, self-critical where appropriate and fit for purpose.

100 The audit team was able to see the external examiner's reports for the previous three years. These expressed general satisfaction with the programme's varied methods of assessment, as with the standards of assessment, standards of teaching and module design. Although they raised no substantive issues, the team was able to see how they were formally processed by the College's ASC from documentation provided.

101 Many examples of different types of written assessed work were made available to the audit team. These matched the expectations of the programme specification and were generally in line with the views of the external examiner. The general standard of student achievement was appropriate to BA (Honours) History and the award's location within the *FHEQ*.

102 The audit team found the student handbooks fit for purpose and provided user-friendly information. The information for professional attachments was also clear and fit for purpose. The contents of the handbooks are also available in rather different format on the history web site with hyperlinks to the Module Catalogue and web sites external to the College as sources useful for study purposes. Students whom the team met expressed their satisfaction with the helpful written and electronic information provided.

103 History staff, students and external examiners commented positively on the learning resources and environment, finding them appropriate for the programme. Students commented on their use of the University's Brotherton Library as well as the College's library and internet. The DSED and history teaching staff emphasised the helpfulness of the subject liaison librarian regarding library resources and student help, while the Web Development

Officer assisted the staff member responsible for the history pages in keeping information up to date.

104 Students described the sensitivity of teaching staff to feedback and their rapid and positive responses. The published findings of institutional satisfaction surveys could also lead to changes, students informed the audit team, by being taken up in the History SSAC, which, from documentation the team saw and its meeting with students, fulfilled its intended functions. The minutes of SSAC meetings are publicly displayed and students the team met instanced positive staff responses to issues raised. From its meetings with history students and the documentation it consulted, the team found solid evidence that students were actively involved in the quality management of their programme.

105 From the printed documentation it consulted, its reading of relevant web pages and its meetings with history staff and students, the audit team was able to establish that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for the programme of study leading to the award of BA (Honours) History.

Section 4: The audit investigations: published information

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

106 The College provided the audit team with a range of published information including: the Undergraduate Prospectus 2002; the Postgraduate Prospectus; the College's first Annual Report 2002; Student Handbook 2002-03; the Lecturing Staff Handbook 2003; the Senior Managers' Handbook November 2002; and the Support Staff Handbook 2002. In addition, the team saw recent issues of the irregularly produced college newsletter *Insideout*, which is a means of informing staff of events and college developments, and an example of QED - The Quality Enhancement Digest, an occasional publication circulated to all full-time and fractional staff by the Director of Learning and Teaching. The team also saw an issue of the weekly Chaplain's newsletter, circulated to all staff and students and displayed on notice-boards. At subject level, the team saw student handbooks in the three DAT areas. The College also provided access to its intranet and the unrestricted pages of the College's web site.

107 The audit team found the information on the web pages well indexed and user friendly. The accuracy and use of information published on paper

and the institutional and subject web pages were discussed in two meetings with a representative selection of students. Institutional and course guidance information was also discussed in the meetings with students forming part of the DATs.

108 The SED explained that the Undergraduate Prospectus was prepared by the Marketing Communications Manager under the direction of the Head of Admissions and Marketing in collaboration with staff at subject and faculty level, as well as relevant senior staff. The perception of academic staff the audit team met was that there was initial 'producer responsibility' for the accuracy of promotional material published on paper and in electronic form. Deans had a role in checking that information was accurate, but the final responsibility for promotional material in paper form resided with the Assistant Principal (Registrar), who formally approved its publication. With regard to information on the web site, the team learnt from the SED that the Director of Information Support Services was working at the time of audit on a 'revised information and communications technology strategy' which will ensure responsibility for the accuracy of information put on the web. From teaching staff the team met it learnt that the Web Development Officer is currently proactive in attempting to ensure information is up to date.

109 Students who met the audit team made it clear that they were well satisfied with the information that had been made available to them. Some students considered that the Undergraduate Prospectus had, if anything, undersold the quality of the student experience in the College and none voiced any concern that the College's promotional material might have been in any respect inaccurate, unreliable or at all misleading. Similar satisfaction was expressed regarding course handbooks and programme information on the internet. All the students the team met were aware of criteria for assessment. They told the team that they would know where to look should they feel the need formally to complain; invoke the published appeals procedure; or make use of student support services.

110 Positive features of the College's information policy were the user-friendly nature of the web site and the range of institutional and programme-level information made available in paper and electronic forms. The audit team noted the care taken by the College to obtain feedback on its promotional material and the extent to which student expectations of their programmes of study had been met by means of college-wide surveys and module evaluation questionnaires providing opportunities for

comment on the accuracy and quality of information. While arrangements for monitoring the accuracy and effectiveness of promotional material were considered by the team to be robust, it noted that the College may want to consider establishing comparable arrangements for material on the web. From documentation consulted for the DATs the team was able to observe that despite variations in the information supplied at programme level there was basic consistency in the provision of core information across programmes. The team noted that the accuracy of the institutional SED was congruent with the College's careful management of the quality of other information it provides.

111 From the documentation it consulted and from its meetings with staff and students, the audit team concluded that the quantity and quality of the information available both for prospective students and students studying for awards was good.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

112 From 2004, the institutional audit process will include a check on the reliability of the information set published by institutions in the format recommended in HEFCE's document 02/15, *Information on quality and standards in higher education* (HEFCE's document 02/15). The College reported that ongoing developmental work was being undertaken to meet its responsibilities.

113 In its SED, the College records that it has 'taken account' of HEFCE's document 02/15 in its enhancement of its information systems. It considers itself 'well placed to respond to the recommendations contained therein' with regard to the accuracy, completeness and reliability of published information. In general, as senior managers told the audit team, the College was awaiting definitive guidance from the relevant national body.

114 In general, the audit team was satisfied that the College is engaging constructively with the recommendations in HEFCE's document 02/15 and is well placed to meet its responsibilities in this area. The team was also satisfied that the information the College is publishing currently about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards is reliable.

Findings

Findings

115 An institutional audit of the College was undertaken during the week commencing 12 May 2003. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the College's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility for the development and delivery of programmes leading to awards from the University. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with HEFCE, SCOP and UUK, three 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 College for enhancing current practice.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

116 In its SED the College described, and expressed confidence in, its arrangements for the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards. The College's approach to quality management is shaped by its relationship with its accrediting body, the University. The accreditation is supported by a number of reporting mechanisms which are reviewed on an annual basis. The operating arrangements include the routine involvement of USRs and University committee representatives who provide annual reports of their activities to the University and the College.

117 The SED makes it clear that the University plays an important and valued role in the oversight of, and a benchmark for, the implementation of its procedures and the effectiveness of the operational arrangements of the collaboration. The accreditation agreement has led to improved communication and greater clarity of respective responsibilities. The audit team examined the contribution of the College, in its relationship with the University, to the management of its quality and standards and formed the view that the College was playing a significant part in the improvements to, and clarification of, the respective roles and responsibilities.

118 The College describes its committee structure, and particularly the relationship of the Academic Board, CVC and the ASC as being 'at the heart of the College's system of quality assurance'. The College routinely considers a wide range of information and data through the operation of its committee structure. These monitoring and review processes include scrutiny of external examiners reports, statistical data, information relating to the student experience and the annual review of the

relationship with the University. At faculty level, FQSCs consider, among other things, proposals for curriculum changes and the impact of external developments on the design and operation of provision at the subject level. The College has indicated that, with effect from 2002-03, FQSCs should consider the outcomes of end-of-year reviews of provision undertaken by course teams.

119 Support for all aspects of the operation of the College's quality assurance arrangements is provided by the Quality Support Unit, which collects and disseminates data and communicates information regarding relevant policies and procedures. The College has produced a Quality Assurance Document Directory, available on-line and in hard copy, which contains the detailed evaluation, monitoring, review and validation procedures of the College. The College's intranet also contains the definitive source of validated provision in a 'module bank' and provides access to committee minutes and papers. The audit team found the Directory, as with much of the information available through the College's intranet, to be readily accessible and informative.

120 The SED prepared by the College for the audit described how the College has developed its approaches to periodic review in recent years leading to a system of internal audits. The College intends that, in terms of the interface with annual monitoring, periodic review should span a longer period to permit the identification of trends. The Academic Board has agreed a schedule for these audits based on quadrennial review. The team formed the view that this change to the College's review processes was built upon a thorough evaluation of previous practice. It also concluded that both the annual review and internal audit examples scrutinised were thorough and consistent and would provide appropriate information for the College in its scrutiny of quality and academic standards.

121 The audit team noted that the Academic Board had agreed that a review of the FQSCs should be conducted and that this had been initiated. From the evidence available, the team saw that these committees routinely considered external examiners reports and action to be taken; reports from SSACs; proposed changes in curricula and a range of other issues. Some annual reviews of subjects were also considered but the team found that there was some lack of transparency in the ways in which each of the FQSCs operated in this regard, and the information that subsequently passed through to the ASC as a result of this scrutiny was consequently somewhat inconsistent. The College had already fully recognised this issue in its agreement to review

the operation of the FQSCs and their interface with ASC and CVC. In light of these findings, the College may find it desirable, in the context of its planned review, to consider means by which the FQSCs might discharge their responsibilities more transparently and consistently with particular reference to their role in annual monitoring.

122 The findings of the audit confirm that broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the College's current and likely future management of the quality of the awards.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards

123 The SED described how the College maintains academic standards through its accreditation agreement with the University and other forms of externality. A key feature of this approach is the role and operation of USRs. External input into the College's quality assurance processes had also been extended to include a procedural external examiner role, as well as external examiners in all subject areas and, the involvement of independent external panel members at validation, review and internal audit. The involvement of College staff in a range of external activities, such as external examining, has also increased. The College may nevertheless find it desirable to continue to build on its existing staff and institutional engagement with the HE sector, and on the increased externality recently incorporated into its management of quality and academic standards, by increasing the use of independent external membership of panels and audit teams in validation and review.

124 The SED also highlighted the systematic and scrupulous consideration of reports from external examiners as one of the distinguishing characteristics of its framework for the assurance and enhancement of quality and standards. External examiners are specifically required to comment in their reports on the compatibility of academic standards with subject benchmark statements and the *FHEQ*; the fair and consistent operation of assessment and award processes; and whether standards are 'comparable with those of similar programmes at the University and other UK HE institutions'; and pass on good practice from elsewhere in the sector. In its study of the documentation provided, including examples of assessed student work, the audit team concluded that the systems in place were operating as described and were very effective in securing the standard of awards made by the University. The team commended the meticulous implementation

and monitoring of the robust processes which enable the College to derive maximum benefit from their external examiners in the assurance and enhancement of quality and academic standards.

125 On the basis of the evidence available to it, the audit team concluded that the College's arrangements for securing standards were effective. The findings of the audit confirm that broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the College's current and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for supporting learning

126 The College's support for student learning is facilitated by the opportunities for participation by student representatives at all levels of the management structure. The audit team believes the operation across the College of SSACs as a forum for the representation and consultation of students at subject level to be commendable. There are procedures in place designed to ensure that the student body has extensive opportunity to be involved in debating and contributing to all aspects of provision in both developmental and operational aspects. The team found students to be very supportive of the open and responsive culture throughout the College in both academic and support departments. The team concluded that the arrangements for student support are characterised by a strong emphasis upon student consultation within both formal and informal structures and that student representation was well organised, reliable and effective.

127 The audit team recognised that the College had sought to ensure through the Students' Union that greater support be given to student representatives. The College may find it desirable to formalise training for student representatives to realise fully the clear potential of SSACs as a significant contributor to the management of quality and standards.

128 The College's support for student learning is linked to its ability to appoint high-quality staff. The College has robust procedures in place to support the quality of appointments. In meetings with new staff it was clear that these policies were being implemented in an appropriate manner, and that the experience of recruitment matched the policy expectations. The small size of the College means that the opportunities for promotion to senior posts is limited and the HR Strategy sets out clear policies for providing other career development support designed to promote the retention of staff. The College has also

implemented a new programme of teaching observation which is peer based and developmental in nature and there is a system of staff appraisal. Meetings with staff indicated that the systems were clearly understood and operated as planned.

129 The resource allocation system has enabled the College to provide support in relation to identified needs and it was clear that the management procedures used by the College were responsive and delivered within an efficient and cost-effective framework. In meetings with students the audit team noted that there was a high level of satisfaction with resources for learning provided by the College, and students also benefited from use of the University's library and from the College sections of the University VLE system, Bodington Common. The team was able to conclude that the College was providing good learning support opportunities for students, was undertaking effective monitoring of resource use, and was able to demonstrate a responsive approach to solving both strategic and operational resource problems.

130 There is a system of personal tutors, and this has recently been revised as a Progress Tutor system integrated with Personal Development. There was general agreement that this was developing in an extremely effective manner as the major component of a system of well-planned, systematic and interlocking arrangements which enable students to derive maximum benefit from their involvement in the College community. The audit team concluded that students had excellent access to personal academic support and that academic staff were providing clear arrangements for access. The scale of the College also allowed the effective operation of an informal support system in which students had ready access to a range of academic advice.

131 There is a range of integrated support services for students, and the audit team found that students valued these support services, were aware of these resources, and were entirely satisfied that the College provided a responsive and caring environment both for resident and non-resident, full and part-time students. The team saw evidence that clearly demonstrated the College's commitment to the support of its students within an inclusive and supportive framework, and noted that further improvements in access to support services would result from the planned co-location of services due to take place within the current capital programme.

132 Overall, the audit team concluded that student access to academic guidance and personal support was good, that central support services and resource allocation systems were effective and well managed,

that staff development was embedded and effective, and that there were good systems of staff recruitment and retention.

Outcomes of discipline audit trails

Management

133 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 programmes was appropriate to the title of the awards and their location within the *FHEQ*. The programme specifications and validation documents set out appropriate educational aims and learning outcomes, and link these to teaching and learning styles. Key features of the management programmes at undergraduate level are the two professional attachments and these had clearly provided a very positive contribution to students' personal and professional development. Student evaluation of the programmes was very positive, and there was a range of learning resources. Support and guidance given by academic staff was highly rated and noted as an important feature of the provision by students. The team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for programmes of study leading to the award of BA (Single/Joint Honours) Management.

Media

134 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 programme was appropriate to the title of the award and its location within the *FHEQ*. Validation documentation and student handbooks provide appropriate information on educational aims and learning outcomes, and the relationship between these and learning activity and assessment is clear. The Media Scheme is vocational by design with an emphasis on the integration of theory and practice, enabling students to combine a core theoretical framework with a wide range of media skills and practices. Students have access to a wide range of resources, including a purpose-built Media Centre. Professional attachments are a key feature of the programme providing valuable personal and professional experience and development which was particularly appreciated by the students. Students also valued being taught by staff combining both academic and professional experience, and rated highly the support and guidance provided by staff and the caring environment of the College. The standard of achievement in these programmes is appropriate to the title of the awards and their location within the

FHEQ. The quality of the learning opportunities available to students is suitable for programmes of study leading to the award of BA (Joint Honours) Media in combination with a range of other available subjects.

History

135 From its study of examples of assessed work, and from discussions with students and staff, the audit team formed the view that the standard of student achievement in the programme was appropriate to the title of the award and its location within the *FHEQ*. The team noted the existence in single honours history of a clearly worded programme specification which was aligned with the *Subject benchmark statement*. Student evaluation of their programme was very positive, with frequent comments being made on the helpfulness of teaching staff. Students the team met were clear about methods of assessment which they were able to consult in handbooks and on web pages. The SSAC functioned well as a forum for the representation of student views and staff consultation of students. Links between academic staff and library and web personnel were operative. The team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for a programme of study leading to the award of BA (Honours) History.

The use made by the institution of the academic infrastructure

136 The SED describes how the College's framework for the assurance and enhancement of quality and standards includes systematic consideration of the *Code of practice*, subject benchmark statements and the *FHEQ*. In its study of the documentation and in discussions with staff, the audit team found that the academic infrastructure had been widely debated at all levels and integrated into the College's policies and procedures.

137 Although programme specifications were not yet in existence in all areas, the College had built a requirement into validation and review procedures for all existing programmes to introduce programme specifications at their next review and revalidation point.

138 Professional attachments are an important and distinctive feature of College provision and the audit team was able to confirm through discussions with stakeholders the importance and value of these placements. While recognising that the College has taken full account of the intentions of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Placement learning*, the College

may find it desirable to continue reviewing its professional attachment provision with a view to the further enhancement of its existing practice. This may include further development of its mechanisms for feedback to employers.

139 The audit team recognised good practice in the ways in which the College has drawn carefully on the Agency's external reference points, including the *Code of practice*, the *FHEQ* and subject benchmark statements in reviewing its practices; and the subsequent incorporation of these practices into its standard quality assurance procedures.

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

140 The SED had been prepared by a small steering group which had routinely involved all sections of the College through regular briefings and by providing opportunities for debate. The steering group included student representatives and their thorough involvement in arrangements for the production of the document had, in the students view, rendered a separately produced SWS unnecessary. The audit team considered that the SED was an informative and appropriately self-critical account of the effectiveness of the College's procedures. The team formed the view that this self-critical and inclusive approach was characteristic of the College and considered this to be an example of good practice.

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

141 In the SED, the College identified a range of issues that it intends to address to enhance the quality of provision and the standards of awards. Issues included continuing to develop the independent perspective afforded by external review; monitoring the recently introduced arrangements for periodic review through internal audit; further consolidating elements of the academic infrastructure into the fabric of the College's framework for maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards; monitoring the impact of the appointment of the retention and recruitment coordinators; devolving specific responsibilities to faculty level while maintaining appropriate oversight at institutional level.

142 Other areas identified by the College to enhance the management of quality and standards included completing its review of the work of the FQSCs; monitoring the end-of-year reviews at faculty level; further developing its analysis of the Student Satisfaction Survey; completing its review of the professional attachment programme; monitoring the contribution made by the faculty learning and teaching coordinators to the identification and dissemination of good practice.

143 The audit team noted that the College has already begun to address many of these issues. It is a testament to the College's current maturity that it is so clearly intent on continuing to learn from practice. The team considered that these planned actions would make a useful contribution to the College's processes and operational practices for assuring the quality of programmes and enhancing the learning opportunities available to students.

Reliability of information

144 The audit process included checking on the procedures for ensuring the accuracy and reliability of information published by the College. The audit team did not itself find, nor did students and staff it met indicate, any inaccuracy or unreliability of information. Students, in particular, were appreciative of the scope and reliability of information available to them.

145 The audit team noted that the College had a well-established system for monitoring the accuracy of printed promotional material. It further noted that the College was actively preparing a comparable formal monitoring system for its web pages.

146 The audit team learnt that the College was aware of the requirements set out in HEFCE's document 02/15 and was moving, appropriately, towards fulfilling its responsibilities in this respect.

Features of good practice

147 The following features of good practice were noted:

- i. the characteristically self-critical and inclusive approach used by the College to prepare the institutional SED (paragraph 24);
- ii. the meticulous implementation and monitoring of the robust processes which enable the College to derive maximum benefit from their external examiners in the assurance and enhancement of quality and academic standards (paragraph 41);

- iii. the ways in which the College has drawn carefully upon the Agency's external reference points, including the *Code of practice*, the *FHEQ* and subject benchmark statements, in reviewing its practices; and the subsequent incorporation of these reference points into its standard quality assurance procedures (paragraph 45);
- iv. the regular use of college-wide staff and student surveys as sources of information for senior management and the ways in which the latter's response to the views expressed therein are fed back to the staff and student bodies (paragraph 52);
- v. the operation across the College of SSACs as a forum for the representation and consultation of students at subject level (paragraph 53);
- vi. the College's use of the intranet as a means of communication of information to staff and students (paragraph 66);
- vii. the development of systematic and interlocking support arrangements which enable students to derive maximum benefit from their involvement in the College community (paragraph 74).

Recommendations for action

148 The College is advised to consider the desirability of:

- i. considering, in the context of its planned review of FQSCs, means by which the discharge of the responsibilities of these committees might be rendered more transparent and consistent across the College with particular reference to their role in the annual monitoring process (paragraph 36);
- ii. building on its existing external engagements with the HE sector and incorporating this greater externality into its management of quality and academic standards (paragraph 38);
- iii. formalising training for student representatives to achieve the clear potential of SSACs as a significant contributor to the management of quality and standards (paragraph 54).

Appendix

The College's response to the audit report

The College welcomed the opportunity for external scrutiny of its arrangements for the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards afforded by the revised audit process. Staff, students, former students, attachment providers and representatives of the accrediting body were pleased to engage with the audit team.

The College notes that the highly positive nature of the report is entirely consistent with the outcomes of annual and periodic external reviews undertaken on behalf of funding and accrediting bodies, and takes pride in the acknowledgement by the audit team that many aspects of its arrangements represent good practice. It is also pleased to note that none of the recommendations for enhancement were categorised as either essential or advisable.

The recommendations which the audit team have made, and for which the College is grateful, appear to represent encouragement to proceed with work already in hand. As the audit team recognised, very few of the matters which were raised were 'not already the subject of some sort of review at the time of the audit and it is a testament to the College's current maturity that it is so clearly intent on continuing to learn from practice'.

The College will approach the recommendations in a manner consistent with its recognition that the assurance and enhancement of quality and standards is a journey without end. The College is very conscious that its students deserve and require the highest quality and standards of provision and is committed to ensuring that these expectations are fully met. The audit report is heartening testimony to its progress in making a reality of this commitment.

