

Canterbury Christ Church University College

MAY 2005

Preface

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

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

The purpose of institutional audit

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

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

Judgements

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

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

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

Nationally agreed standards

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

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

The audit process

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

The main elements of institutional audit are:

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

The evidence for the audit

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

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

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

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

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Summary

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited Canterbury Christ Church University College (CCCUC, or the University College) from 23 to 27 May to carry out an institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of awards.

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

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

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

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

Outcome of the audit

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

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

Features of good practice

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

- the comprehensive range of student support initiatives contributing to the quality of students' learning experience

- the maintenance, during a period of considerable institutional expansion, of a strong, collegiate environment across the campuses and partner colleges
- the innovative approach to the first year curriculum which is intended to improve the confidence and retention of students, which became evident in the course of the history discipline audit trail (DAT).

Recommendations for action

It would be advisable for the University College to:

- monitor the effectiveness of strategic planning of resources, to secure effective forecasting and management of the demands of academic developments, therefore maintaining the quality of the learning experience
- implement a policy to ensure that research students receive full preparatory training before taking up teaching responsibilities.

It would be desirable for the University College to:

- complete the proposed review of internal committees/working group structures and their interrelationships, whilst retaining the benefits accrued from the delegation of quality processes to faculties
- amend the pro forma for the nomination of external assessors to validation review panels to ensure the identification of potential conflicts of interest
- clarify the criteria for defining small-scale validations.

Summary outcomes of discipline audit trails

Sport science; history; computer science

The audit team also looked at the following specific areas of provision by undertaking DATs: sport science; history; and computer science, to find out how well the University College's systems and procedures were working at the discipline level. The University 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 statement given above, the team considered that the standard of student achievement in the three discipline areas was appropriate to the title of the various awards and their place in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. The team considered that the quality of the learning opportunities available to students was suitable for programmes of study leading to the awards.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings the audit team also investigated the use made by the University College of the Academic Infrastructure which QAA has developed on behalf of the whole of UK higher education. The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points to define both good practice and academic standards. The University College was making effective use of the Academic Infrastructure to inform its framework for the management of quality and standards.

From the end of 2005, QAA'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 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance*. The University College is proceeding appropriately with the publication of this information.

Main report

Main report

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

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

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

Section 1: Introduction: Canterbury Christ Church University College

The institution and its mission

4 CCCUC is an independent institution offering a wide range of full and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses and a

broadly-based research programme. The University College has an Anglican Foundation and was founded in 1962. Starting as a small independent college of less than 500 students - all training to be schoolteachers - in the 1960s, it now has over 13,500 students. The extension beyond teacher training began in 1978 with the commencement of joint honours degree programmes in a range of subjects in the arts and sciences. In 1986, the validation of the degree programme in occupational therapy began the growth of programmes for the professions allied to health that now form a significant part of the academic provision.

5 The University College was granted the power to award its own degrees by the Privy Council in 1995. The College's degrees were formerly awarded by the University of Kent, which continues to be the awarding body for research degrees. Students registering for the first year of a degree programme since 1998 have registered for degrees of the University College. In October 1998, following approval by the Privy Council, the title Canterbury Christ Church University College was adopted. The University College applied for full university title in December 2004, at the time of the audit the University College had been advised that the criteria for University Title had been met, and this was publically confirmed shortly after the audit team completed its visit.

6 CCCUC is the predominant centre of higher education (HE) in Kent for the public services - notably teacher training, nursing, policing and social care - and is a significant provider of vocationally-oriented degree, diploma and certificate programmes for full and part-time students in a wide range of academic and professional areas. Most provision is located at the main Canterbury Campus although the University College established, in 2000, a second purpose-built Thanet Campus at Broadstairs in East Kent and, commencing in 2004, a third at Medway as part of the collaborative universities at Medway project, shared with Mid-Kent College and the Universities of Kent and Greenwich. An associate faculty, Salomons, is located near Tunbridge

Wells. The self-evaluation document (SED) described the facilities to support learning in the University College as 'excellent', although the challenges of providing an appropriate standard of estate, in the constrained planning environment of Canterbury, is recognised.

7 There are 10,283 full-time equivalent (FTE) students studying full or part-time at the University College; 82 per cent undergraduate, 17 per cent taught postgraduate and 1 per cent research postgraduate. 63 per cent (by FTE) of the students study full-time. The expansion of the University College to include its additional campuses, the significant growth in student numbers and increased diversity of academic provision have set particular challenges for the University College as it aims to maintain a strong collegiate environment and 'comparability of student experience'.

8 The Governing Body is responsible for the determination of the educational character and mission of the University College and for the oversight of its activities; the effective and efficient use of its resources; the solvency of the institution; and the safeguarding of its assets. With effect from 2003, the Governing Body has incorporated status as a company limited by guarantee. This change has transferred ownership of land and property from the Church of England to the Governing Body, thus giving the Governing Body the same autonomy as the majority of other higher education institutions (HEIs). The Academic Board (AB), a committee of the Governing Body, is responsible for all aspects of the academic work of the University College and has established a number of committees to assist it in this task. Members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) chair all of these committees. This team comprises the Principal and Vice Principal, the Chief Executive of Salomons, College Secretary, Assistant Principals and Deans. Impending retirements will mean some change in structure at the senior level over the next year or two, but the Principal informed the audit team that the appointment and role of successors was seen as a process of evolution rather than radical change.

9 The academic work of the University College is based within four faculties, each led by a dean, and an associate faculty at the Salomons Campus specialising in management and clinical psychology. The four faculties: Arts and Humanities; Business and Sciences; Education; and Health each include academic departments, and also have centres that focus on particular research and consultancy activities. A Graduate School has oversight of the arrangements for the supervision of research students. The provision of support services is based on central departments whose managers report directly to a member of the SMT.

10 Other than at the Salomons Campus, academic departments are not restricted to one campus, and, in several cases, contain staff who work both at Canterbury and elsewhere. The Heads of Department are all based at Canterbury.

11 The University College's mission is:

'As an outward-looking University College and a Church of England Foundation, our mission is to provide excellent academic and professional education underpinned by research, scholarship and creative work and by Christian principles and values.'

12 In the context of its Foundation, the University College underpins all aspects of its work with a commitment to Christian principles and values, but welcomes students of all faiths or none. It also 'reaffirms the importance of tolerance, equality of opportunity, diversity, and the promotion of a spirit of free enquiry.' Accordingly, and in pursuit of humanitarian and academic ideals, one of its expressed aims is to 'recognise and respect educational, social, religious and cultural diversity within the University College community', and promotes the duty of response to the needs of the disadvantaged. The University College considers that this aim is clearly demonstrated by its response to the widening participation agenda.

Collaborative provision

13 Collaborations with a wide range of organisations outside the HE sector are considered by the University College to be 'an

essential feature' of its work. These partnerships have primarily been established to support that element of the institution's mission that relates to professional education and preparation for the public services. The links include those established with the Teacher Training Agency, NHS Trusts, Strategic Health Authorities and the Police Service.

14 Partnerships have also been established with a number of other institutions to extend HE opportunities. These are considered to be strategically important for those elements of the mission of the University College that refer to preparation for work and for providing flexibility in provision. This work is also described in the SED as contributing to widening participation and increasing opportunity. The audit team was informed that collaborative provision comprised 57 full-time students and 1,432 part-time students, with 746 FTE taught by the partners. The partnerships are:

- Foundation Degree (FD) Diploma in Child and Youth Studies with Newham Council
- FD in Child and Youth Studies offered in partnership with five Church College HEIs: College of St Mark and St John, Plymouth; Liverpool Hope; St Mary's College, Twickenham; Trinity and All Saints College, Horsforth, Leeds and York St John's College
- Advanced Certificate in Education delivered in partnership with Bexhill College, Canterbury College, Lewisham College, Orpington College, South Kent College, Thanet College
- BA (Hons) Post Compulsory Education and Training delivered in partnership with Orpington College and South Kent College
- programmes delivered with the YMCA George Williams College, East London:
- Certificate in Professional Studies, Understanding Connexions
- Diploma in Professional Studies, Understanding Connexions
- DipHE/BA Informal and Community Education

- DipHE/BA Informal and Community Education (distance learning)
- Higher National Certificate (HNC) Computing, managed and led by Thanet College
- FDs managed by the University College:
- FD in Tourism and Hospitality Management (partner Canterbury College)
- FD in Computing (partner South Kent College)
- theology provision delivered in partnership with the Dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester
- DipHE in Ministry
- Postgraduate Diploma in Ministry
- MA in Ministry.

15 The University College offers two awards delivered through distance-learning programmes, both delivered through its partnership with YMCA George Williams College. The audit team was informed that the distance-learning students are additionally supported by a system of regional tutors.

Background information

16 The published information available to the audit team included:

- the report of a quality audit by the Higher Education Quality Council undertaken in 1996
- QAA subject review reports since 1998
- QAA reports on a number of developmental engagements.

The University College provided QAA with:

- an institutional SED
- a discipline self-evaluation document (DSED) for each of the three areas selected for DATs
- examples of student work in the areas explored within the DATs
- various policy and strategy documents
- student statistics and first destination data

- full access to the University's intranet which contained all policies, procedures and regulations for the management and enhancement of quality and standards.

17 During the audit visit further comprehensive documentation was provided, including minutes of committee meetings, data from academic monitoring and review, continuing access to the intranet and reports from professional and statutory bodies.

The audit process

18 A preliminary meeting was held at CCCUC in October 2004. Matters discussed included the University's pattern of internal review and the distribution of students across programmes. Following the preliminary meeting QAA confirmed that three DATs would be conducted during the audit visit. On the basis of the SED and students' written submission (SWS) the audit team decided that the DATs should be: sport science; history; computer science. QAA received the institutional SED in January 2005 and the DSEDs in March 2005.

19 A briefing visit was conducted at CCCUC on 18 to 20 April 2005. The purpose of the briefing visit was to help the audit team 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 end of the briefing visit a programme of meetings was submitted to the University College in preparation for the audit visit. No thematic enquiries were considered necessary.

20 At the preliminary visit for the audit, the students of the University College were invited, through their Students' Union (SU), to submit a separate document expressing views on the student experience at CCCUC, and identifying any matters of concern or commendation with respect to the quality of the student experience and the standards of awards. In January 2005 a statement was submitted to QAA by the SU on behalf of the University College's students. The team is grateful to the students for preparing this SWS to support the audit.

21 The audit took place from 23 to 27 May 2005. During the audit visit the audit team met with staff and students both at institutional level and in relation to the selected DAT areas. The team is grateful to all those who made themselves available to discuss the University College's quality management and academic standards arrangements.

22 The audit team was Dr S Gilroy; Mr P Griffiths; Professor P J Hodson; Dr P Marsh, advisors, Dr D Dowland, audit Secretary. The audit was coordinated for QAA by Professor I M Robinson, Assistant Director, Reviews Group.

Developments since the previous academic quality audit

23 In the nine-year period since its last audit the institution has undergone significant change. Student numbers have increased by 45 per cent, degree-awarding powers have been received and employed, and a much-enlarged portfolio of academic programmes has been created. The academic structure of the University College has also changed, initially to a six-faculty structure in 1998, and subsequently to the current four-faculty arrangement in 2001. The 1996 audit report included one recommendation considered as 'necessary', relating to the currency and accuracy of its promotional materials. The University College comments within its SED that this matter was addressed through a combination of the work of an appointee to a new post of Director of Admissions and Recruitment, and the further development of a number of internal quality control mechanisms. The recommendations in the report were considered by the audit team to have been systematically and thoroughly addressed and the responses consolidated into routine practice within the institution.

24 In recent years, the University College has been subject to external appraisal through the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), QAA subject reviews and developmental engagements, Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted) assessments and professional body accreditations. Seven submissions were made to the 2001 RAE with outcomes of three 3a, two

3b and two 2 ratings. Between 1998 and 2001 12 subject reviews were conducted, all resulting in quality being approved. Three developmental engagements were conducted between 2003 and 2004, each expressing confidence in the standards achieved at the institution. Since 1996, 30 reports have been received from a range of professional bodies without significant concerns being raised. The University College, in its consideration of these reports, identified good practice and emerging issues, which, unless rectified, might have led to problems for the institution in pursuit of its mission.

25 The SED systematically and thoroughly addressed each of these emerging issues and described in an appropriately evaluative manner the ways in which the University College is seeking to address the problems identified.

Section 2: The audit investigations: institutional processes

The institution's view as expressed in the SED

26 The University College asserts that its approach and processes for quality assurance are well-established and that the institution benefited significantly from the period during which it was an accredited college of the University of Kent. The SED described how the present structures are therefore built upon firm foundations, although they have naturally evolved further following the receipt of degree-awarding powers. The SED also outlined the principles upon which the University College bases its quality assurance (QA) activities and procedures. Initially, the oversight of quality management of academic programmes was centralised, managed by the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) and administered by the Academic Standards Unit (ASU). There existed some delegation to Salomons, because of its geographical separation and its history as an independent and successful unit validated by the Open University Validation Services, and to the Education Faculty in recognition of its size, complexity and greater maturity in this matter.

Recognising the implications of growth and the creation of more autonomous faculty structures, the University College introduced a more general delegation of the management of QA responsibilities in 2002. Faculty Quality Officers (FQOs) were appointed and structures devised, and the new system was fully implemented in 2003. The ASU administers academic QA procedures, and a Quality Office provides operational support for external and internal academic review processes within the University College. The quality processes and organisational structure are all described in the Quality Information File (QIF).

27 One of the shortcomings identified by the University College related to a 'lack of consistency in the use of some quality assurance procedures', principally concerning aspects of some Programme Quality Monitoring Reports (PQMRs). To safeguard the integrity of its QA activities, the institution responded through staff development, the publication and dissemination of appropriate information for staff, including the production of a QIF, and by ongoing evaluation of its procedures. This evaluation included the production of annual reports on aspects of the QA process, such as validation and on the preparation for PQMRs. The University College has thus acknowledged that delegation of quality matters involves its staff in a commitment to change, and in the development of an agenda based upon evaluation and review. The devolved system of quality management is scheduled for review by the institution in December 2005.

28 The SED stated that the 'overall management of quality lies with the Vice Principal who has direct responsibility for the ASU. In learning and teaching, deans, heads of department and programme directors are responsible for the management, enhancement and the delivery of academic quality'. Within the devolved regime, the oversight of learning and teaching lies with the deans, supported by their FQOs.

29 In 2003, the University College instituted a process of internal reviews of departments and support services. These were designed so

that departmental groups might reflect on the management and quality of their provision and the achievement of their published statements of purpose. The reviews are also designed to enable the institution as a whole to audit the implementation of its academic policies and strategies.

30 Liaison among those whose roles are concerned with QA is maintained through the Quality Audit Group (QAG), chaired by the Vice Principal. This group, described by senior staff as a 'lynchpin' in the QA processes, keeps University College systems under review, develops appropriate policies and procedures and prepares documents for consideration by ASC.

The institution's framework for managing quality and standards

31 The AB is one of the committees of the Governing Body, with specific responsibility for all aspects of academic work. The SED noted that the AB may establish necessary committees to discharge its function, any of which would be chaired by a member of the SMT.

32 The SED described three principles which form the basis for the University College's quality assurance procedures:

- QA is a shared activity; owned and carried out at the closest possible point to the process of learning and teaching
- academic QA is a holistic process of review, validation, evaluation and revalidation
- the internal QA mechanisms operate, where relevant, in conjunction with professional bodies and take account of the requirements of external agencies.

33 The AB's responsibilities embrace the issues of quality management of academic activities and student support, and it discharges those responsibilities through reporting systems with its supporting committees.

34 The AB charges ASC with developing and exercising oversight of policies, principles and procedures needed to maintain and enhance quality. The ASC's work is supported by the Faculty Quality Management Committees

(FQMCs) and subcommittees for programme proposals, learning and teaching policy, assessment and taught higher and research degrees.

35 The ASU, with a remit for operating academic quality processes, is managed by a Director, the Manager of Academic Partnerships, and the Quality Management and Enhancement Officer. The SED noted that ASU is responsible for:

- the administration of academic quality assurance and enhancement procedures
- management of programme approval and review, oversight of monitoring and evaluation
- operation of the external examiner system
- oversight of collaborative programmes
- technical advice and administrative support
- application of the Academic Infrastructure.

36 Liaison between the faculties and ASU is enabled by the QAG which meets frequently. QAG is chaired by the Vice Principal and its members include the academic staff of ASU, FQOs and the Academic Registrar. In addition to its brief of keeping systems under review and preparing documents for ASC approval, QAG organises workshops and systems support for departmental staff in consultation with the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit (LTEU).

37 A Quality Office was established in 2002. The audit team was advised that its role was managing the operational issues of quality, with responsibilities to lead, support and facilitate standards and quality in all aspects of work at the University College, including support services. Typical roles would be the management of external review events and the processes of internal review. The Quality Manager is accountable to the Dean of Education.

38 The detail of the operation and interrelationships between these multiple structures is detailed in the QIF and supporting documents. While the audit team recognised the robustness of this approach, which had guided and supported the University College through

the early stages of a devolved quality system, it felt that the documentation did not make clear the distinction between the roles of the Quality Office, which appeared to be largely employed on distinct project activities, and the ASU. The structure of the quality framework did, however, appear to be understood by those staff met by the team, but nevertheless the team felt that the existence of two parallel academic quality organisations within the institution may lead to confusion and misunderstanding.

39 The audit team noted that the scheduled review of processes at the end of 2005 would present an opportunity to reflect on the current model now that devolved powers have become successfully embedded. The team supports the timeliness of this review, recognising that it presents the institution with an opportunity to consider the complexity of the current structures and their interrelationships, while retaining the benefits accrued from the delegation of quality processes to faculties.

40 The SED noted AB's responsibilities for the oversight of the assessment process. Specific assessment requirements to assure learning outcomes are clearly defined at validation and summarised in programme specifications. FQOs have responsibility for the implementation of the University College's assessment policies within each faculty. The DATs confirmed that these have been widely adopted and followed (see paragraphs 150, 167, 179 below). Appropriate subject benchmark statements are identified within programme specifications.

41 The University College Strategic Plan calls for the institution to continue its record of extending HE opportunities to a wider community. To support that mission, CCCUC operates multiple campuses, some in collaboration with other academic partners. One of the DATs conducted by the audit team reports on aspects of collaborative provision (see paragraphs 140, 145 below) confirmed the extension of the University College's footprint in the region. The team observed that the University College's assessment framework has been adopted by partners, and saw that

CCCUC takes full responsibility for standards of provision offered by collaborative partners. The University College holds the detail of staff teaching on collaborative programmes and has structured liaison meetings between the partner teaching teams and those teaching staff based at the Canterbury campus. Where multi-campus programmes are designed, staff frequently deliver teaching across those CCCUC sites, providing consistency in the student learning experience. Assessments across all locations offering CCCUC programmes are essentially identical. Where collaborative partners offer awards outwith CCCUC-designed programmes, the institutional monitoring processes establish and assure standards. The team noted that where serious concerns had arisen and been identified, CCCUC had initiated appropriate action to re-secure standards (see paragraph 145 below).

42 In its discussions with staff and students, and in its reading throughout the audit, the audit team was struck by the strong sense of belonging and engagement exhibited on all sites within the community of CCCUC (see paragraphs 41, 92, 123, 130, 138). The team came to the conclusion that the maintenance, during a period of considerable institutional expansion, of a strong, collegiate environment across the campuses and partner colleges is a feature of good practice.

43 The audit team formed the view that the work of the FQOs was pivotal to the success of the delegated quality processes, facilitating communication with the centre of the organisation while also encouraging a consistency of approach within faculties. The FQOs, senior academics, chair the FQMCs and carry out the day-to-day operational management of the quality process.

44 The audit team concluded that the structures for quality and standards were secure, but noted the forthcoming opportunity of an internal review to address the structural complexity of the quality framework, especially in the context of the multiple line management pathways that currently underpin the framework.

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

45 CCCUC's Strategic Plan commits to enhancing the quality of the experience provided for students and staff. All staff are expected to engage in the enhancement of academic quality. In order to maintain and enhance its standards, the University College has adopted an approach that takes advice and good practice identified externally, but also draws from internal QA activity and staff research.

46 In describing itself as a 'teaching-led institution underpinned by research' the Learning and Teaching Policy is seen as being a 'key document'. The policy aims to achieve 'excellence in education', a principle that lies at the heart of the mission statement. Oversight of learning and teaching rests with the deans, with leadership of the planning and delivery of programmes being the responsibility of heads of departments and programme leaders.

47 The LTEU was established in 2002. This Unit carries significant responsibilities for the development and enhancement of all aspects of pedagogy. The unit is supported by faculty-based Learning and Teaching Coordinators and Learning Technologists. The Learning and Teaching Policy Sub Committee monitors the outcomes of the work of the Unit, and in turn reports to ASC.

48 In setting out enhancement plans for the future, the SED described CCCUC's approach as being that of building on acknowledged strengths of present systems, but also exploiting its 'corporate self-awareness' by being ready to address areas where improvement is required. The SED identified several areas for improvement:

- the need to clarify links between the faculties and the centre, in particular reporting through central committees
- the long-term position of its main agencies for the assurance of quality and standards in all its activities
- the accessibility and credibility of monitoring data and their effective use

in the management of departments and programmes

- the management of student numbers in the complex environment of an evolving portfolio of programmes, widening participation, retaining students and sustaining standards.

49 The audit team noted that the University College had in place mechanisms for identifying good practice, and through both academic management channels and central support units had opportunities to spread and develop such practice throughout the institution.

Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

50 The SED stated that academic quality is a 'dynamic cycle generating continuous improvement in the design and delivery of the programme. It involves responsive action based on critical, confident self-appraisal'. The University College has tested its quality assurance procedures on several occasions, gaining accredited status with its then validating body, the University of Kent, in 1992 and its own taught degree awarding powers in 1995.

51 It further described the approach to approval, validation and revalidation as clearly defined and centralised. Outlines for new proposals and revalidation of existing programmes are considered at early stages of their development by the faculty and then by the Programme Proposals Sub-committee (PPSC). They define the programme aims, learning outcomes, content and level along with rationale, congruence with University College and external/professional requirements, feasibility/recruitment targets and related resource issues. Academic Planning Committee receives recommendations and grants approval to proceed to more detailed development.

52 Draft validation documents include a programme specification, which makes reference to benchmarks and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The documents also require the support of the dean, indicating

commitment to resourcing the proposal. In its analysis of some dissatisfaction expressed regarding resources (see paragraphs 122, 144, 169 below), the audit team agreed with the University College that academic planning and resource management are crucial to a high-quality student experience, and concluded that it would be advisable for the institution to monitor the effectiveness of strategic planning of resources, to secure effective forecasting and management of the demands of academic developments, therefore maintaining the quality of the learning experience.

53 Internal scrutiny events, chaired by the FQOs, occur before validation panels receive the formal validation proposals. Validation events are chaired by a senior staff member and supported by ASU. At least two external assessors are members of the panel, bringing externality to the judgement. The response to conditions of approval set at validation is considered by ASC, and reports are considered at AB for final approval.

54 Periodic review of programmes occurs normally after five years of operation. The periodic review process of a programme includes the production of a separate review document in addition to the presentation of normal validation documents. In cases where, exceptionally, academic revalidation is not appropriate, a stand-alone quinquennial review would be held for the provision. While the institution ensures external peer membership of validation and review panels, the audit team learned that there is no routine check to ensure the independence of these external panel members. The team therefore came to the conclusion that it would be desirable for the University College to amend the pro forma for the nomination of external assessors to validation review panels to ensure the identification of potential conflicts of interest.

55 The University College has recently introduced an additional review process, Internal Review (see paragraph 29), which is intended to meet national expectations as exemplified in the *Code of practice for the*

assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), published by QAA. Internal review was described in papers available to the audit team as embracing 'departmental and programme groups, and the units responsible for support services'. The team was unclear from its reading whether the academic review of taught provision would be consolidated within internal review, and believed that the two periodic review processes operating in parallel might lead to confusion amongst staff and students. The University College is encouraged to consider this in its review of processes, due to take place in 2005.

56 The audit team scrutinised the detailed procedures for validation, revalidation, periodic review and internal review. It also read reports from a number of such events, covering a range of provision and departments. The team was able to confirm the systematic use of external academic and, where appropriate, professional peers in the University's approval and review processes.

57 The SED described the process for minor changes to validated programmes. These are considered by the PPSC, chaired by the Vice Principal and referred through ASC to the appropriate Examination Board for approval. PPSC may recommend that a separate small-scale validation event is required where significant changes such as a variant or addition to an existing programme is being proposed.

58 The audit team reviewed documentation relating to several validation events, including a proposal that had been offered to PPSC as a minor amendment. The team noted that this proposal had been referred to a small-scale validation event. The deliberations of the subsequent validation panel had resulted in approval, but with a large number of conditions. While recognising the CCCUC validation procedures result in very precise conditions, and thus potentially a larger number than may be the case in some other HEIs where conditions are expressed in more generic terms, the team was surprised at the range and critical nature of the issues identified.

59 The University College criteria by which a proposal is viewed as a minor amendment were not clearly defined. The audit team noted this lack of clarity and also observed that the minor modification procedure did not include a normal internal scrutiny of documentation before a small-scale validation event. The team concluded that this had contributed to the large number of conditions in the validation event reviewed. The team believes that it would be desirable to introduce a sharper set of criteria to define when small-scale and full course validation procedures should be followed.

60 The processes for the annual cycle of evaluation and monitoring are detailed in documents produced by ASU and approved by ASC. All programmes are required to produce an annual PQMR, as part of the annual cycle managed by each faculty and overseen by ASU. The faculty review is a formal process involving a panel, with the outcomes considered by FQMC. FQMC is able to make recommendations resulting from the review process to appropriate bodies or groups within the University College and reports to the ASC on responses made to external examiners' reports. The external examiners' reports form an integral part of the PQMR analysis, along with student performance statistics and student feedback.

61 2003-04 was the first year in which delegated powers to faculties had been fully operational. Some variation in practice and content was identified by ASU in reviewing consistency of approach and the maintenance of a cross-University College approach. Thus some modifications to the reporting pro forma and further staff development using the FQOs have taken place over the past year. The University College view this cyclic amendment of procedures as having the 'potential to support continuous improvement'.

62 In addition to these faculty-based arrangements, elements of collaborative provision remain outwith these procedures. For example, YMCA George Williams College follow the same PQMR procedure, but this is forwarded directly to ASU, since there is no faculty structure to receive it.

63 The audit team was able to follow the PQMR process in the three DATs. Each provided the data collection and analysis activity of the review procedures, and reflected upon the range of inputs required. These PQMRs included action plans on matters identified, and reported on previous action plan progress to close the loop. The team formed the view from this evidence that annual monitoring procedures are fully operational and that CCCUC reflects on the procedures in order to effect appropriate development and change.

64 The University College stated in the SED that its procedures 'provide for a five-year cycle of outline approval, validation and review/revalidation of every programme', and is fully in accordance with the *Code of practice*. A quinquennial review is 'held in cases where revalidation is not appropriate'. In the light of its discussions and reading, the audit team concluded the procedures of CCCUC were being observed in all disciplines reviewed, and that they appropriately address the *Code*.

External examiners and their reports

65 The use of external examiners at CCCUC is detailed in the External Examiners' Handbook, embracing the precepts of the external examining section of the *Code of practice*. Heads of department nominate external examiners, in consultation with the Deputy Chair of the Examination Board. Following approval at faculty level by the FQO and the dean, the nomination is considered by the External Examiner Appointments Panel, which then makes recommendations to AB.

66 The University College offers a comprehensive induction for external examiners including the provision of the previous three external examiners' annual reports and relevant documentation pertaining to institutional and programme regulations and procedures. A formal induction briefing by the Deputy Chair of the Examination Board includes a meeting with students.

67 The arrangements for external examiners of collaborative programmes are reported as

being 'the same as, or demonstrably equivalent to, those used by the University College'. One difference in the remit of the external examiners is that on collaborative programmes it extends to cases where all or part of the HE level 1 is taught by and examined by staff who are not employed by CCCUC.

68 External examiners are required to judge the appropriateness and impartiality of assessment instruments, consistency of treatment of individual candidates, and comparability within the sector. The external examiner reports seen by the audit team were essentially supportive and expressed confidence in the assessment strategy and the supporting internal scrutiny processes (see paragraphs 147, 167, 176 below).

69 On receipt, external examiners' reports are distributed to the Principal, the Vice Principal, the Director of Academic Standards, the dean of faculty, the FQO, the head of department, and the programme director. Issues deemed to require immediate attention are identified by the Vice Principal and the Director of the ASU and referred to the head of department, programme director and others as appropriate. Cross-institutional issues are identified in the summary report produced by the ASU.

70 Each FQMC receives the relevant external examiners' reports and the ASU summary report which identifies significant issues and examples of good practice. Each faculty subsequently makes a report to ASC. The ASC monitors the faculty reports and action plans, identifying and dealing with cross-institutional matters, reporting in turn to AB.

71 External examiner reports are also considered at the first possible Programme Management Committee whose responsibility it is to identify appropriate action. The matters raised by the external examiner and the subsequent action identified at programme level is reported in the PQMR. The Programme Review Panel meeting which considers the PQMR also has sight of matters raised in the ASU's summary sheet. The head of department or the programme director subsequently informs the external examiners of the programme's

response to the matters they raised and sends them a copy of the action plan and PQMR.

72 In its reading, the audit team learned that the Policy and Guidance for the accreditation of prior and experiential certificated learning (APEL and APCL) describes how external examiners must approve in writing all APEL applications for credit exemption. However, the External Examiners' Handbook makes no reference to this element of the external examiners' role. The team considered that the University College would no doubt wish to remove this discrepancy in due course.

73 On the basis of students' work and external examiners' reports the audit team was able to confirm that the University College's procedures were consistent and in accordance with the *Code of practice*, and made a positive contribution to the assurance of quality and standards within the institution.

External reference points

74 The SED stated that the University College takes a wide range of external reference points into account during academic planning and when measuring its achievements. In particular, supported by other documents, it explained how the University College had considered and incorporated all sections of the *Code of practice* into its policies and procedures.

75 On receipt of original or revised sections of the *Code of practice*, they are passed to the most appropriate committee or person to action and monitor. The ASC maintains institutional oversight of progress in the consideration of any implications for the institution.

76 Following the 1996 audit, CCCUC was advised to clarify 'the nature and provisions of its appeals process'. Using the revised *Code of practice, Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters*, CCCUC has thoroughly reviewed and revised its appeals process.

77 With regard to the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and programme specifications alignment is assured through the processes of validation, annual review and

periodic review. At subject level, the audit team found that staff were aware of relevant subject benchmark statements and have made appropriate use of them in constructing programme content (see paragraphs 143, 162, 174 below). Staff are supported in their engagement with the Academic Infrastructure by a range of documentation available to staff on the University College intranet.

78 In the light of discussions and its reading, the audit team formed the view that CCCUC's provision is suitably aligned with all aspects of the FHEQ and the *Code of practice*, at both institutional and, where appropriate, subject levels.

Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies

79 The SED reported on the three recent developmental engagements and 12 subject reviews that had taken place between 1998 and 2001. In these subject reviews the areas of student support and guidance, learning resources and student progression and achievement have been the most positive features. Developmental engagements commended the institution on the relevance of learning objectives, professional practices, flexibility of learning opportunities and self-evaluation.

80 The audit team noted that the full range of reports and reviews by external agencies has been considered by the SMT and the ASC, with appropriate action plans drawn up as a matter of standard practice. These have aided the University College in the identification of good practice, but also allowed for the recognition of shortcomings that had institution-wide implications. Issues requiring attention have included data management, linking assessment to learning outcomes and consistency in the application of the quality management process established by the ASC. In response to these issues, appropriate action has been taken. The University College has made a significant commitment to improving the data management issue and believes that the student record system is now in a position to provide robust, reliable and timely information.

The Principal affirmed his belief that data management issues have been resolved and this was further reinforced by staff who had received training on the current system.

81 The SED reported that accreditations by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies have been made for 27 programmes in health and social science disciplines. Ofsted inspection for all teacher education programmes has resulted in high grades and other visits have included the British Psychological Society which granted approval with no conditions attached. Recommendations are considered by the relevant departments, actions proposed and both are reported through PQMRs to the ASC.

82 Staff development for FQOs and improvements in defining the content of the PQMR documents have been established in response to concerns on consistency in the application of the quality management process. At the time of the visit, the results of this action have yet to be reviewed following the completion of a further academic cycle.

83 Overall, the audit team concludes that the inputs from external agencies are contributing positively to the assurance of quality and standards and matters raised receive appropriate, effective and timely response and action at both discipline and institutional level.

Student representation at operational and institutional level

84 CCCUC has a commitment in its Student Charter to 'provide opportunities (and encouragement) for students to participate in the work for its Committees' and 'to assist through the Student Union, with the training of students who serve on these Committees'. The 1996 audit recommended that the University College should provide student representatives with support, and a subsequent AB working group determined that student representation was to be strengthened. Departments are now required to report the names of student representatives to the AB and a Student Forum has been established at institutional level to provide for a dialogue between student representatives and senior staff.

85 The SED noted 'a healthy variety of practice' at departmental level to ensure student representation in academic decision-making, with the degrees of emphasis placed upon staff-student liaison committees (SSLCs) and programme management committees determined by departmental custom and practice. These are supplemented by departmental notice boards, websites and the use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to ensure communication and consultation with students. The SED noted that all departments and programmes must provide evidence of consultation with students through appropriate forums of as part of their annual programme monitoring and periodic subject and departmental reviews. The University College is thus able to confirm that the student voice is being given due weight.

86 Students were keen to emphasise to the audit team the proactive nature of the SU's Union's role in developing the student representative system and the support which the University College was providing for training representatives and enabling them to make their voice known. The proactive approach was also evident in the work of the Assistant Principal (Academic) who chairs the Student Forum and encourages student representatives to contact her directly with issues of general concern.

87 The audit team met with a number of students representative of the University College and also of the specific subjects covered by the DATs. Some of the students were elected representatives at programme level, others were officers of the SU and others were broadly representative of the student body in terms of mode, location and type of study.

88 The students confirmed that they had effective avenues of communication at programme and departmental level and also emphasised the importance of electronic communication for raising issues of concern. In those departments within which DATs were conducted, the role of the SSLC was said to be effective (see paragraphs 155, 170, 182 below). The audit team saw evidence in minutes of the history SSLC that students were able to raise

issues about the curriculum and resources which were then pursued further by the staff team at AB Committee level. Other students, for example, those based at Thanet and Medway campuses, noted their ability to make representations both to their departments and the Campus Tutors directly. The SU had also taken the initiative to identify issues through an on-line forum, which they could then pursue either in the Student Forum or in their meetings with the Principal.

89 The audit team formed the view that the University College had effective means of ensuring student representation at institutional, departmental and programme levels and that although there was a degree of variability in local arrangements, all students were able to utilise both formal and informal channels to make their views known on programme quality. There was evidence of the University College responding to student representation on general issues such as campus security, accommodation and learning resources as well as evidence in the DATs that student views on their programmes were considered and addressed appropriately. Students were involved in a number of central initiatives, for example, the Student Retention initiative developed by the Student Retention Working Group. It was clear that the University College made extensive attempts to include students in institutional policy-making. Developments such as the Student Forum, although only recently established, provided evidence of the seriousness with which the University College was seeking to gather the opinions of the whole student body on all its campuses.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

90 CCCUC employs a range of methods to elicit feedback from students, graduates and employers. In addition to the systems of student representation at programme, departmental and institutional levels (see paragraph 85 above), the main means of drawing upon student opinion is the triennial Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS). This, together with the survey undertaken for

the SWS, provided comprehensive information on the student perception of their experience at the University College.

91 The 2004 SSS achieved an 86 per cent response rate from its sample of the student body. Three quarters of the respondents were 'very satisfied' with the quality of their teaching and the evaluation noted that 'plenty of evidence has been provided that departments have made progress in raising satisfaction levels and lowering dissatisfaction levels'. The Student Services Committee (SSC) considers the outcomes of the survey and the ASU, working with other parts of the institution, produces an action plan which is posted on the University College web site. Other committees and units such as the Information Services Committee (ISC) and the Library Service also pick up issues noted in the Survey. For example, the Acting Director of Library Services reported to the ISC on the response to adverse comment in the 2004 survey regarding the availability of books and library resources and noted actions which were being taken (see paragraph 120 below).

92 The University College has also been involved in the pilot for the National Student Survey and is working with the SU on the issues raised in the SWS. The latter's survey of student opinion obtained a 28 per cent response rate and noted positive opinion about the quality of teaching, the accuracy of published material and the representation of student views in particular. Aspects of library and learning resource provision, accommodation and financial services were evaluated less positively. The survey covered all campuses and students on collaborative programmes and it gave a positive view of the student experience at the University College.

93 At programme level, a standard student evaluation feedback form is employed to elicit student opinion, and the audit team saw evidence in all three DATs that this instrument was being used effectively. Programmes where vocational relevance is important, for example, those in health and education, demonstrate strong links with professional bodies and employers, with several practice-based

programmes relying heavily on practitioner and employer involvement. This feature was particularly noticeable in the continuing professional development programmes at Salomons. Representatives of the dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester paid strong tribute to the University College's willingness to engage with the professional development agenda of theological training and the integration of the employer perspective into the academic curriculum. The sport science and computer science DATS also contained examples of employer input into the development of vocational programmes such as FDs (see paragraphs 141, 159 below).

94 There was less evidence of feedback from graduates although the SWS survey did sample the views of research students and postgraduate students at Salomons who expressed satisfaction with their support and academic experience. Taking the evidence from the University College's own student satisfaction surveys; course evaluations; involvement in the pilot of the National Student Survey and the survey carried out by the SU for the SWS, there was a wealth of detailed student feedback available to institutional management. The audit team was reassured through its meetings with the Principal and other senior managers that the institution was using the outcomes of its various feedback processes to reflect seriously upon the strengths and weaknesses which were revealed.

Progression and completion statistics

95 The SED described problems that CCCUC had been experiencing with the quality of its data management systems and processes, which in turn had led to a lack of confidence in centrally held data. An analysis of student retention in one subject area also drew attention to a high attrition rate in one particular year which was considered to be partly a reflection of inaccurate centrally held data (see paragraph 145 below). The audit team read of the steps taken to rectify the data quality concerns and was pleased to read reports from users of central data that the benefits of the enhancements were being realised. Programme Directors and

Deans also confirmed their role in the monthly checking process which had been instigated to generate more robust data.

96 The audit team read of the use of statistical data provided by the Registry for the purposes of the Annual Programme Quality Review Process. The data enable programmes to report on trends in student progression, achievement and retention. There was evidence from the DATs of programmes responding promptly and proactively to the data analysis to enhance quality and standards (see paragraphs 145, 163 below).

97 Concern at institutional level with student retention led to CCCUC adding the matter to its Risk Register and creating a Student Retention Working Group in January 2004. The Group has reported and introduced a range of initiatives across the University College. These included the Student Champion Scheme which was designed to ensure that students required to be re-assessed during the summer were well-supported; a Student Attendance Policy supported by rigorous monitoring of non-attendance; and the appointment of a case worker to identify and target support to those most likely to withdraw. An oversight of student retention issues was gained through consideration, by the SSC and then AB, of a paper on student retention trends from 1998-99 to 2003-04.

98 The SMT exercises overall responsibility for reviewing admissions and recruitment data by receiving monthly admissions statistics from the Director of Admissions and Recruitment. The Assistant Principal (Academic) has a strategic responsibility for admissions while the Director of Admissions and Recruitment exercises day-to-day authority.

99 The Progress Report (2004) regarding the development of the Widening Participation Strategy 2001-2004 illustrates how CCCUC calibrates its progress against not just its own targets but also against HEFCE performance indicators. It notes that further analysis is needed of the higher than expected loss of mature entrants; the higher than expected non-continuation of 'other full-time undergraduate

entrants' and the lower than expected numbers of part-time students in receipt of a Disabled Students' Allowance.

100 Overall the audit team formed the view that while there had been significant concern with data quality and management, the institution has taken appropriate steps to address these, to the extent that it now has statistical information which is of good quality. The team was also of the view that CCCUC was using both snap-shot and trend data appropriately to evaluate quality and standards.

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

101 The SED reported that the effectiveness of the University College depends on the quality and commitment of its academic staff. As a result the institution puts a heavy emphasis on maintaining appropriate processes to support the appointment, development and deployment of staff.

102 In the 1996 audit report, two issues relating to promotion and appraisal were noted as advisable and desirable respectively. The University College now has clear promotion criteria, with a publication detailing the criteria to progression to Principal Lecturer, Reader and Professor. Staff confirmed that the criteria were clear and operated effectively. The provision of training for all those conducting appraisal is now provided by a Staff Development Programme.

103 The University College presented clear procedures for staff recruitment, recognising the strong emphasis on professional education intrinsic to the institution's mission. There has been a growth in research activity across the University College over recent years which has been reflected in the recruitment strategy.

104 The deans oversee the academic recruitment process, ensuring that all those involved in the recruitment process are aware of their wider equal opportunities responsibilities. Newly appointed Heads of Department receive this training as part of their induction training.

105 The University College operates a probationary year for newly appointed staff. During the initial stages of induction, staff are encouraged to gain wide experience in University College processes. This is supported by a system of mentoring and 'buddy support'. Peer observation of class teaching is an established procedure, with reports seen by the Head of Department. These reports may inform the staff appraisal system along with additional information, for example, that drawn from student feedback. The Head of Department is responsible for ensuring staff appraisal is conducted within the framework laid down by the University College. This process has successfully contributed to the institution's achievement in gaining the Investor in People (IiP) award, initially in 2001, and reaffirmed in 2004. The Staff Development Office oversees the appraisal process in a monitoring role, and confirms for SMT that the process is being used positively and effectively. The audit team met a range of academic staff, including those who were newly appointed and promoted, who were all supportive of the appraisal process.

106 Staff appointments at collaborative partner institutions are the responsibility of the partner. The University College receive details of all staff who teach on collaborative programmes and these details are reviewed by the CCCUC department to ensure the appropriate quality of teaching staff.

107 In 2002, the University College introduced Teaching Excellence Awards and one year later decided its scheme would operate in parallel to the national teaching fellow Award. Six Teaching Excellence Awards were awarded in 2004 and the first National Teaching Fellowship awarded to the University College was in the 'rising star' category.

108 The audit team concluded that the University College provided an appropriate framework for teaching staff appointment and appraisal. The evidence presented gave confidence that the procedures were operated fairly and evenly across the institution.

Assurance of the quality of teaching through staff support and development

109 The University College made a commitment in 2003 to improve students' learning experiences with the implementation of a revised learning and teaching strategy. The Learning and Teaching Policy Subcommittee of ASC is responsible for the introduction and implementation of this strategy.

110 Support for staff development in the teaching process is delivered through the LTEU. The LTEU works in collaboration with other units such as the ASU, through the Quality Management and Enhancement Officer, and the Staff Development Office to develop and enhance all aspects of pedagogy, including information and communications technology (ICT).

111 A recent example of the various groups working together was noted when the new VLE was introduced. The implementation strategy required training for staff, and the University College delivered this through a series of training programmes and workshops. The audit team met with a range of academic staff who confirmed the development strategy had been helpful and supportive.

112 The University College has made a commitment to staff development on a continuing basis. The SED reported that 27.2 per cent of academic staff are currently registered on doctoral or master's programmes. A range of other staff development opportunities, including scholarships, are offered. These enable staff to focus their energies on the specific activity in a dedicated manner.

113 Secondment of staff from four of the faculties to act as LTEU coordinators to promote development, provide external faculty links and share good practice has been viewed by staff as a beneficial strategy in the adoption and promotion of the VLE as a learning resource.

114 Since 2004, new teaching staff are introduced to the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education as part of their induction process. This is a Higher Education Academy accredited programme in

which 70 staff have participated since its inception. The University College has recently encouraged research students to undertake training in teaching and learning. However, although the research students met by the audit team confirmed their active role in the teaching process, they indicated they had received no training, but had received advice from their research supervisors. The 1996 audit had previously noted the advisability of providing training and support for research student teaching. While the University College now has a structured process arranged by the Graduate School to provide elements of HE teacher preparation in the research training programme, the evidence presented to the team to support this position indicated that this was still not fully secured (see paragraph 183 below). The team concluded that it remains advisable that the University College should implement a policy to ensure that all research students receive full preparatory training before taking up teaching responsibilities.

115 Overall the audit team concluded that the staff development structures and policies, all of which contributed to the IIP recognition, were widely operated as defined and were appropriate to the needs of the institution.

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

116 The University College offers few distance-learning programmes or programmes with distance-learning elements, although in addition to the more standard courses, there is distance supervision of research students based overseas.

117 The University College has established a VLE within which staff are encouraged to place learning materials. The audit team noted that the adoption of the VLE was uneven across the institution, with limited use in some areas (see paragraph 181 below), while wide coverage had been achieved in other, more information technology (IT)-focused disciplines (see paragraph 150 below) or work-based learning programmes (see paragraph 159 below). The implementation strategy recognises and

accommodates the varying pace of introduction within the different disciplines and notes that the current stage of implementation is on target. There are no quality criteria evident for VLE materials, and considerable flexibility is permitted. The students with whom the team met expressed considerable enthusiasm and support for the VLE and its implementation and welcomed its increasing use. Part-time students and those on campuses at a distance from Canterbury were particularly supportive of the VLE and the assistance it offered them. The expansion of VLE utilisation has been supported by a staff development programme and departmental targets have been set for its wider adoption. Multi-campus communication was notably enhanced by the VLE operation.

118 It was identified that the FD in Management Tourism and Hospitality with Canterbury College and some of the health programmes offered components of e-learning. The arrangement with YMCA George Williams College also involves the use of distance-learning materials. These materials were presented and considered during the validation for the programme, in line with the validation procedures of the University College.

119 The audit team encourages the institution to continue the VLE implementation strategy and allied staff development activity, and agree that it should lead to wider adoption and a more structured approach to content management.

Learning support resources

120 The SED noted that QAA subject review reports have consistently identified on-site learning resources as being of a high standard while noting that surveys of student opinion have revealed some dissatisfaction, particularly with the availability of library books and journals (see paragraph 91 above). A significant proportion had expressed dissatisfaction with the availability of books on reading lists and with the availability of journals. The University College is engaged in reshaping its learning resources strategy and organisation in response to a period of rapid student number growth and increased multi-campus operation and is taking a number of

initiatives to address dissatisfaction and to maintain a secure learning resource base for its expanded operation. In June 2003 an updated Information Strategy was approved by AB and in 2004 a Learning and Information Services Management Group was established reporting to the Dean of Business and Sciences. Two managerial posts are still to be filled in this team. In 2005 a senior appointment of Strategic Director (Resources) was created to oversee finance, personnel, estates, hospitality services and the Medway campus and to ensure sound physical, financial and business planning support for academic developments.

121 The ISC monitors information and learning resources matters on behalf of Academic Board and receives regular reports from the Director of Library Services and the Director of Computing Services and Estates on their operational responsibilities. The Service Departments produce service reviews on an annual basis and are also subject to the process of periodic Internal Review alongside the academic departments. Computing Services underwent internal review in January 2004; the review confirming the quality and leadership of the service while noting action points for improvement.

122 In recent reports to the ISC the Director of Computing Services reported on the need for improvements to the University College email system, and the recent improvements in student computing facilities including extended 24-hour access, increased number of networked halls of residence and an increase of computers for general student use. The Acting Director of Library Services reported on an action plan response to critical comment in the SSS, in which the concern over availability of texts had been clearly made. In its reading the audit team was made aware that the University College was working to improve awareness of electronic resources and to extend library opening hours.

123 ISC papers indicated that the enhancement of learning resources provision was a matter of policy debate in the University College and that a number of major initiatives were in process, including the expansion of the joint learning resources facility at the Medway

campus and the potential development of a new learning resources centre in Canterbury. Senior staff, including the Principal, recognised that this issue was of strategic significance and pointed to the recent significant increases in expenditure on learning resources as well as the need to embark upon the development of new library accommodation to cope with increased student demand for books and electronic resources. The audit team also heard from both staff and students that learning resources were being managed effectively in order to overcome major problems, particularly through the use of the VLE, other electronic resources and sharing specialist collections operated locally by academic departments. Staff and students were particularly supportive of the roles of the Faculty Liaison Librarians and Faculty Learning Technologists in working with departments to address local problems. Students at the Medway and Thanet campuses were also particularly appreciative of the ability to order books from the Canterbury campus library if they were not available on their own site and the subsequent swift despatch of requested material.

124 Notwithstanding the progress being made in addressing learning resources issues and responding to student concerns, it was the audit team's view that the University College needed to continue with the implementation of its strategy and planning for the improvement of learning resource provision and related accommodation for study, in order to ensure that student number growth and programme diversification did not impact adversely on the quality of the student learning experience. There was some evidence from committee deliberations, management appointments and policy developments, that the University College understood this imperative and was initiating the necessary improvements to maintain the satisfaction of students and staff with the learning environment.

Academic guidance, support and supervision

125 In the light of a recommendation in the 1996 audit report that the University College should consider 'ensuring a uniform system of

personal tutoring for all full-time and part-time students', CCCUC's Student Charter confirms the right of all students to have a personal tutor.

126 A framework has been developed to establish good practice in academic guidance and support, outlined in the University College's 'Guidelines for personal tutoring'. It notes that each new student is allocated a personal tutor who must maintain formal contact and provide appropriate academic support with their tutees throughout their academic programme. The emphasis is on regular tutor-initiated meetings in the first year with a gradual move to student-initiated contacts during subsequent years, although tutors are required to remind their tutees of their availability at the beginning of each year of their programme. Joint honours students may have one or two personal tutors, depending upon custom and practice in their departments. In some departments, personal tutorships are combined with other roles such as placement tutor. Regardless of the combination of roles, however, the University College's guidelines make clear that a student must be able to contact a named individual for academic guidance and have their academic progress reviewed on a regular basis. Academic guidance and support is monitored through the annual programme monitoring process and by the annual student satisfaction surveys. Both these sources of evidence indicate that students know who to approach when they have academic problems and that there is a process in place for referral to more specialist study skills support when required.

127 In the case of research students, the Graduate School's Handbook and Code of Practice for MPhil and PhD Students and Supervisors clearly defines the role and responsibilities of the first and second supervisors and the independently chaired supervisory panel upon which they sit. A training programme has been developed for intending supervisors and care is taken to ensure that new supervisors are made part of an experienced supervisory panel. The Handbook provides extensive advice to both

supervisors and students on their mutual responsibilities (see paragraph 183 below).

128 The audit team met a number of undergraduate and postgraduate students during the course of its enquiries. A common theme was the high quality of personal academic support from teaching staff, research supervisors and the campus tutors at the Thanet and Medway campuses. It was noted that many subjects provided tutorial support and guidance above and beyond the minimum requirements specified in the University College guidelines. This impression is confirmed by the SSS and the SWS survey, both of which showed highly positive responses to questions about the quality of teaching and academic support. The team formed the opinion that the comprehensive range of student support initiatives (see paragraphs 41, 49, 84, 85, 88, 89, 97 above) contributing to the quality of students' learning experience is a feature of good practice.

129 The University College is undertaking a number of pilot examples of Personal Development Planning (PDP), and the LTEU has developed a web-based PDP recording system, PROGRESS, which is being used in the pilots. In meetings with senior staff, the audit team was told that it was the intention to roll out the PDP system across the University College from September 2005. However, documents provided for the team and meetings with staff and students in the DATs indicated that this timetable might be somewhat ambitious since there was still some concern about the workload implications of the adoption of PDP (see paragraph 175 below). Although the team considered that existing personal academic support arrangements were of high quality, it also believed that the University College may wish to reconsider its planned implementation date for the introduction of PDP in September 2005.

Personal support and guidance

130 The SED noted that the University College is committed to ensuring that the quality of the student experience is comparable at each of its campuses. It further notes that the 2004 SSS shows high levels of satisfaction with the personal

support that students receive. In addition to the support provided at departmental level through the personal tutor system, there are a number of professional support services, accountable to the Director of Student Services and thence to the Assistant Principal (Academic). These include the Student Study Support Unit; Disability and Equal Opportunities; Admissions and Recruitment; Careers and Student Development; Accommodation and Counselling. The International Office coordinates the arrangements for recruiting, inducting and supporting international students and the University College Chaplaincy offers religious and general guidance to all students. On the Thanet and Medway campuses, Campus Tutors coordinate support services and liaise with academic departments and their students. The SSC of AB monitors the operation of student services and their impact on the student experience. Individual services are subject to the process of internal review and to date Admissions and the International Office have undergone review.

131 The arrangements described above provide an effective and professional delivery of services to students, in support of their personal welfare. According to the SWS, students particularly valued the Study Support Unit and its provision of study skills support. Accommodation and Financial Services received less favourable comment and the University College has acknowledged the need to improve customer service training for front line staff particularly in dealing with a more multinational, socially and culturally diverse student population. A particularly praiseworthy initiative has been the development of a retention strategy which includes direct support offered to students needing to resit assessments, using 'student champions' who can offer guidance and advice leading to improved prospects of progression. This initiative, as well as the Campus tutor posts created at the Thanet and Medway campuses, which were favourably commented upon by students who met the audit team, illustrate a comprehensive and effective response by the University College to the support needs of its expanding and changing student body.

Collaborative provision

132 The audit team had the opportunity to review a range of documentation that is used by the University College and its partners in guiding the development of collaborative provision. The team also met with a number of representatives of partner colleges and other institutions, as well as key senior managers within the University College holding specific responsibilities for this area of work. The Strategic Plan describes the aim of the development of partnerships as one mechanism by which the University College can respond 'to the needs of the people, institutions and employers of Kent, Medway and the South of England region'. The team learned that 'the University College approves collaborative arrangements only for programmes within its areas of competence' and that these partnerships are located primarily, but not exclusively, in the Faculties of Health and Education.

133 A Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee of ASC carries the remit for addressing issues of general concern in relation to partnerships. It has strategic responsibility for issues affecting partners as a whole and is chaired by the Vice Principal. Its membership comprises representatives of each of the major partners.

134 Detailed procedures and guidance have been developed to assure the institution and others that the academic standards of all awards made under collaborative arrangements are equivalent to those in comparable programmes delivered solely by the validating institution (see paragraph 41 above). The procedures were initially reviewed through the Collaborative Provision Sub-committee in 1999 in light of the development of the *Code of practice*. The audit team noted that they were revised again and approved by AB in 2004, following the publication of a new edition of this element of the *Code*.

135 The procedures detail the approach to be adopted for approval and development of a collaborative partnership, and subsequently the admission, registration and enrolment of students to the programme. Assessment and moderation requirements are also described. The audit team

heard examples of the ways in which these arrangements work operationally and also reviewed an exemplar validation report which indicated the extent of the thoroughness and detailed review that the University College employs in addressing these quality aspects of its collaborative arrangements. The team also noted the universal use of a template for the Memorandum of Agreement, signed by the Chief Executives of both organisations on a three-yearly cycle, which formed the basis for all partnerships.

136 Overall responsibility for institutional oversight of these arrangements lies with the Manager of Academic Partnerships. Although a Quality Partnership Officer had been in post for some time previously, the audit team heard that the appointment of the new Manager in 2003 provided the opportunity for a new focus and restatement of the University College's position. The team noted that this role and the procedures were continuing to evolve with, for example, plans to incorporate the previous use of an annual 'venue specification form' into the standard programme monitoring reports within the institution. The team formed the view that this development, while being both sensible and appropriate, would need to be supported by documentation and the use of templates to ensure that the PQMRs provided, on a consistent basis, the information required by the University College. In light of the caution that has been evident in the management of partnerships to date, the team had confidence that these developments would be handled with care.

137 As the University College will only permit the development of collaborative work within its area of academic competence, it follows that each partnership has an academic home in a faculty and department. Links are therefore developed through cognate academic channels with two main models being employed. In the case of the two largest partnerships, the programme directors are members of the staff of the University College. In the others, a link academic is appointed 'to support staff in partner institutions, keep the host departments informed about the progress of each cohort and maintain academic currency'. The audit

team noted that the arrangements adopted for managing the longstanding link with the YMCA George Williams College were however unique and that the link has reported centrally rather than through the Faculty of Education.

138 The audit team considered that collaborative arrangements were generally working effectively, with clear and open channels of communication being established and maintained. The team noted one example of immediate action taken by the University College to address an issue around retention with one partner (see paragraph 145 below), and also action being taken following a developmental engagement to address an adequacy of learning resources and to ensure that students have comparability of access to resources. A number of impressive examples were noted of relevant and well-supported staff development activity, and work in support of students being undertaken by various support services. These initiatives provided the team with confidence that the collaborative work of the University College was valued and mutually beneficial, with quality being appropriately safeguarded.

Section 3: The audit investigations: discipline audit trails

Discipline audit trails

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

Computer science

140 The Department of Computing is one of six departments located within the Faculty of Business and Sciences. The Department offers a range of taught awards including EdExcel Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), an FD,

single and combined honours degrees and two MSc awards. Currently there are no research students in the Department, although programmes of study are available. The Department has a partnership arrangement with two further education colleges, Thanet College which operates an EdExcel HNC in Computing and South Kent College, which delivers the first year of the FD.

141 The audit team was provided with a DSED written specifically for the audit, and which included the programme specifications for the FD, honours degrees and master's degrees. Accompanying the DSED were details of the CCCUC validated computing programmes. The DSED drew upon evidence from an internal review which reported in May 2004. The DSED described recent academic developments as a strategy to diversify the range of programmes, given the context of a national downward trend in student recruitment for the discipline. The FDs launched in 2004 had broadly achieved recruitment at the previous levels of the outgoing HND, when national declines of 33 per cent were recorded. Recruitment to the two MSc programmes is low, and a third master's programme was discontinued in 2004-05. The great majority of students are following the BSc programmes. The Department aspires to increases in the number of students recruited overseas, using support from the International Office.

142 An Internal Review, conducted in May 2004, commended the Department on current curriculum developments and encouraged more explicit and consistent use of references to the *Subject benchmark statement* for computing and the FHEQ. The audit team was able to see evidence of the actions taken to amend the programme specifications accordingly, and they show that the awards and skills described are now aligned with the FHEQ.

143 The internal review supported the Department in its aim to achieve British Computer Society accreditation for its awards. The Department recognises the areas which need to be addressed before a submission is made, including the need to strengthen the legal, social, ethical and professional (LSEP)

coverage. The *Subject benchmark statement* for computing embraces the LSEP coverage, and the audit team encourages the Department to further develop the curricula to strengthen the match with the benchmark. The second area identified by the review was the need to strengthen the individual study component of the BSc programmes to deliver a suitable individual student project. Such a development would strengthen student opportunities to demonstrate their analytical skills as expected in the benchmark.

144 The audit team heard from staff that resource constraints, both in the Department and Faculty, had led to an inability to continue supporting a key subject area at final-year level, and a subsequent decision to withdraw delivery of a popular module in that area. This decision reinforced questions for the team regarding the institution's framework for strategic resource planning (see paragraph 52 above).

145 CCCUC monitoring processes include the production of a PQMR for each programme area. It has been acknowledged that centrally provided data to support student progression and trend analysis has not always been accurate. The 2003-04 BSc IT/Computing PQMR reports that no recruitment data could be presented because figures are inaccurate, although it did note the general decline. The audit team was advised that improvements to central systems had addressed the difficulties and that confidence in the currently supplied data had been restored. The data presented in the 2003-04 PQMRs revealed attrition rates above the CCCUC norms, and noted that they were particularly high at South Kent College, with a 40 per cent pass rate recorded for the end of year one. The Department has been rigorous in taking a range of initiatives to overcome the difficulties identified in the partnership and restore a quality learning experience for the students.

146 The PQMRs record action in response to the previous annual monitoring review and report on progress or conclusion, hence closing the reporting loop. Staff development activities in support of quality enhancement of specific programmes are reported in the DSED. The audit

team concludes that annual monitoring processes are appropriate and with the benefit of accurate data in the future, the opportunities for enhanced analysis may bring further benefits and insights.

147 Copies of the external examiners' reports were provided for the audit team. These were supportive of the programmes, endorsing the range of assessment strategies deployed and concluding that overall standards were appropriate and comparable to those elsewhere in the UK. One of the externals has noted the impact of the relatively high number of learning outcomes in each module and course, potentially resulting in increased assessment loads. The Department has responded effectively, and the 2003-04 PQMR for the BSc programmes records that five courses have been modified using the minor amendments procedure to reduce the number of learning outcomes. Other issues raised in external examiners' reports have been followed through in a timely manner and effectively monitored through institutional-wide procedures.

148 It was noted that the final-year honours degree programme had produced course grades with a very long tail of poor results. The external examiner has attributed this to the relatively low entry standards. Given the recent improvements in centrally provided data, the Department may wish to undertake further analysis of entry qualifications and final performance to determine whether a correlation exists and whether any changes to admissions policy or programme delivery are appropriate.

149 The Department noted that 'equally important to our work is the attitude and expectation of these students when they arrive. Despite our best efforts at Open Days there is still a distorted view of what the subject is about.' The extent to which this concern has contributed to the observation of a long tail of poor student performance is unclear, but the audit team would encourage the Department to consider these concerns in the analysis of input and exit levels.

150 The Department has implemented its own assessment strategy based on the University

College's policy, and external examiners had commended the Department on this work. The team noted that developmental work, using Computer Assisted Assessment had strengthened the opportunity for formative assessment and that this might be integrated into the VLE support material which has recently been introduced.

151 The audit team was provided with a wide-ranging sample of students' assessed work, covering all the programmes delivered by the Department. The use of a departmental template was evident on each coursework assignment, giving clear instructions and guidance to students. The external examiners had indicated that they were satisfied with the standard of the student work.

152 The 2002-03 PQMR comments that 'The feedback from staff has been a shade lacking of late and it is a matter that we need to address'. The audit team found that evidence of written feedback was present in most courses, and the staff indicated that verbal feedback was also given. The use of standard feedback forms did ensure some consistency and the small group of students met by the team indicated that this approach generally provided them with sufficient feedback. However, the students also indicated that this could be supplemented by direct approaches to staff, who were always willing to provide additional information at an individual level. Evidence from the students and staff met by the team would suggest that levels of feedback are improving and not having a significant deleterious effect on the student learning experience.

153 The audit team considered the assessment strategy and student work to be relevant to the awards and at the correct level within the FHEQ.

154 Each course leader uses a standard questionnaire, with modifications tailored to each course, to collect student opinion. They also produce a commentary on the course modules, and comment on topics such as the relevance of the curriculum, computing and other resources, student attendance and commitment, assessment techniques, student

performance and on the outcomes of previous action points.

155 The SSLCs are held for each entry cohort, differentiated according to the degree type, and deal with issues ranging from minor day-to-day worries of students to more substantial matters, such as the teaching of programming languages. Matters raised recently have included the scheduling of assessment deadlines, the central storage of data, the teaching methods on one module and preparation for the final-year project. The MSc students' concerns were somewhat more sophisticated, for example access to the high specification computers, but they too were concerned about the scheduling of assessed work.

156 The Department now has a published calendar of dates for assignments across all three years of the programme. This calendar has ensured that there is no bunching of hand-in dates for the assignments, attempting to ensure that there is at least five days between the hand-in dates of assignments.

157 The audit team concludes that the overall quality of the student learning experience is appropriate for each of the programmes of study offered by the department.

Sport science

158 The DAT was conducted for the programmes leading to the award of:

- FD in Physical Activity and Health
- BA/BSc (Joint and Combined Hons) Sport and Exercise Science
- BSc (Single Hons) Sport and Exercise Science
- MSc in Sport and Exercise Science.

159 The programmes are located in the Department of Sport Science, Tourism and Leisure, within the Faculty of Business and Sciences. The FD/BA (Hons) in Physical Activity and Health by work-based learning is a recent development which recruited its first and only cohort (to date) in 2003. The BA/BSc and the BSc Sport and Exercise Science are three-year programmes by full-time study which form the

core of the Department's provision. The MSc in Sport and Exercise Science is a one-year programme by full-time study and a two-year programme by part-time study.

160 The discipline area has sought to respond to changes in the external environment by acknowledging the importance of transferable skills within its courses and also broadening its programme portfolio. This has resulted in two new developments; the work-based learning FD in Physical Activity and Health which enables students to study while remaining in full-time employment, and the BSc Sport and Exercise Psychology.

161 The DSED had been written specifically for the audit and focused on all the sport-related programmes that had been subject to the annual programme quality monitoring processes. The DSED articulated how the subject has developed its curricula and assessment in response to both the report of the subject review conducted by QAA in 2000, and CCCUC's Strategic Plan. In so doing the DSED, and associated documents, demonstrated what action had been taken following the subject review.

162 The DSED was accompanied by the programme specifications for all programmes covered by the DAT. The programme specifications made reference to the appropriate benchmark statements and provided a clear outline of the learning and teaching methods and strategies, assessment methods, programme course structure and the regulatory framework for progression and award. The programme specifications for the MSc and the FD clearly articulated both the aims and learning outcomes for the programmes, however, the BA and BSc programme specifications only made explicit reference to the programme learning outcomes.

163 The DSED included a brief discussion of student progression and completion data which were to be found in the accompanying PQMRs. The completion data included an 'Added Value Analysis' which mapped entry profile, disability and ethnicity against exit qualifications. There is evidence from the PQMR Feedback reports and

from the Internal Review Report 2005 that these data are used appropriately by the programme, particularly with regard to enhancing student retention.

164 Each programme submits an annual PQMR for review by a faculty panel. The PQMRs and the subsequent panel reports confirm that there is an active engagement with quality enhancement. The PQMRs tackle both the positive and critical comments raised by external examiners and course evaluations. The faculty panel reports confirm that subject staff are given critical feedback regarding the quality of the report. The action plans within each PQMR clearly demonstrate what action is being planned, who is responsible and what the timeframe for action is. A recent issue has been that of the adequacy of the computer facilities to support a recent change in the curriculum concerning research methods. There was evidence that this issue was resolved in a timely manner following its referral to senior management by the faculty. As a result part of the campus had recently been refurbished and students and staff, who the audit team met, confirmed their satisfaction with the additional facility.

165 Issues raised by external examiners are responded to in the PQMR (with the points itemised in the Action Plan). External examiners receive a copy of the PQMR as part of CCCUC's feedback process. External examiners and the FQMC confirm that appropriate attention is paid to the external examiners' reports.

166 In addition to meeting some of the programme staff and students the audit team was able to review a sample of assessed student work from all levels of study. The standard of work seen was appropriate to the levels as articulated in the FHEQ, and reflected the expectations of the programme specifications and the views of the external examiners as expressed in their reports. The team noted that the external examiners' reports confirmed the appropriateness of standards in relation to similar programmes at other universities.

167 The assessment strategies and policies employed by the subject area are in accordance

with CCCUC's assessment policy. The appropriateness of the subject's assessment practice was praised in a recent external examiner's report, when the following were noted: the range of assessment modes, the use of examinations and the moderation processes which resulted in students gaining constructive comments on their work. A standard feedback form was used consistently across the subject. The four generic sub-headings on the pro forma, while offering consistency, at times seemed to mitigate against the provision of feedback which explicitly cross-referenced to the assessment criteria. Second marking and moderation practice was seen to be sound. Staff reported that they were committed to ensuring that they met the three week turn-around target for the return of assessed work to students. Students reported satisfaction with the timely return of their work.

168 The audit team saw detailed programme handbooks which provided useful information about the expectations regarding attendance, assessment regulations (including detailed guidance on presentation and referencing of work), indicative marking criteria, progression regulations and key skills. The handbooks were generally consistent, but only the undergraduate handbooks contained the Student Charter, and only the MSc handbook detailed the learning and teaching strategy of the programme and the learning resources which were available to it. No references were found to the availability of CCCUC's VLE, although the team was informed that its use within the Department is only being gradually introduced. The exception was the FD, which uses the VLE as a platform for learning and teaching. None of the handbooks seen by the team detailed how student representation was organised, nor how feedback on the student experience would be sought. It was the view of the team that while the handbooks provided sufficient information regarding learning and teaching and assessment, there was scope for the contents to be enhanced with shared good practice between the undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

169 The DSED acknowledged that the provision of physical resources to support the projected growth of the programmes over the next few years is a major challenge. The Department plans to utilise SRIF3 funds to enhance specialist laboratory provision. Access to learning resources such as personal computers has seen some improvement (see paragraph 122 above) and the proposals to refurbish Clarkson House are expected to bring further benefit. Some course evaluations revealed dissatisfaction with room allocations and there was evidence of these issues being referred on from the programme to the faculty. Programme staff expressed confidence in the institutional processes for ensuring that resources are appropriate for the student numbers being recruited. The adequacy of the resources are monitored through the student course evaluations and the PQMR process and considered by department and senior management meetings.

170 Evidence seen and heard by the audit team confirmed that there was systematic evaluation of the student experience of each course. In addition to this, focus groups are held each year with level 1 students to elicit feedback regarding their experience of the programme. Sport Science Forum meetings give student representatives an opportunity to meet with staff to discuss matters. Issues which had recently been raised through this means included the timing of return of assessed work to students; problems with the unsuitable acoustics, lighting and lack of equipment for lectures scheduled in the Chapel. The agendas and minutes of these meetings are fed back to students by being posted on the University College's shared network drive. Students also reported that they were given time in lectures to feedback to their groups. Students expressed confidence in the University College's ability to deal with issues they raised in a timely manner. There was only limited awareness of the existence or purpose of CCCUC's Student Forum, chaired by the Assistant Principal. The team concluded, however, that students were actively engaged in quality management at subject level.

171 The audit team confirmed that the quality of learning opportunities was appropriate for the programmes of study leading to the named awards.

History

172 History is located within the Department of History and American Studies. There are approximately 250 undergraduate students, studying both single and joint honours. There are also 12 registered research students studying for the degree of MPhil with the possibility of transfer to PhD. There are currently 8.5 members of academic staff engaged in teaching history, all of whom have doctoral degrees. Two of the staff are professors and there are three readers. Part-time sessional staff, including some history research students, are also employed as necessary.

173 The audit team was provided with a DSED prepared specifically for the DAT, and also had the opportunity to study a review of the Department of History and American Studies carried out by the University College. Further documentation, including copies of external examiner reports, minutes of SSLCs and programme committees was made available. Finally, the team had the opportunity to meet the history staff, the head of department, learning support staff and a wide range of history students, including undergraduate and postgraduate research students.

174 The curricular documents and programme specifications for history undergraduate degrees demonstrate due cognisance of the requirements of the *Subject benchmark statement* for history and the level descriptors associated with the FHEQ. This is confirmed in the reports of the external examiners. The history staff drew particular attention to the success of the curriculum in offering both breadth and depth of historical study. In particular they emphasised the comprehensive coverage of medieval, early modern and modern history and the fact that all students were required to experience the study of these major periods, in contrast to the more restrictive curriculum offered elsewhere.

The staff team provided a well-reasoned explanation of the curriculum philosophy of the history undergraduate programme, demonstrating how they enabled both choice of subject specialism and exposure of all students to a range of period studies. In the first year, staff take care to structure the course so that students study the modern periods of history they are most familiar with, building their confidence before extending their study to earlier periods. It was maintained that this approach helped to induct students from varied academic backgrounds into honours degree study and helped establish their confidence, thus aiding retention and progression.

175 The history staff are proud of their contribution to the University College's strategic goal of widening participation, and the programme has maintained rising levels of recruitment over the last three years. The PQMR for 2003-04 notes that 51 per cent of combined honours and 44 per cent of single honours students were mature, 12 per cent and 14 per cent of the same cohorts declared disabilities and 11 per cent of combined and 17 per cent of single honours students entered with Access to Higher Education qualifications. In 2003-04, all single honours students successfully completed level 1 while 23 per cent of combined honours students did not complete. The staff team are maintaining a close eye on the response to the revised curriculum and perceive that it is already having a positive impact on student retention. While single honours students are completely the responsibility of the history team and progression issues can be directly influenced by their actions, the progression of combined honours students may be affected by factors occurring in their other subject specialism. The history team was keen to assert however, that all students received the same degree of personal and academic support, no matter what their study status. While they were preparing to adopt the University College's PDP scheme from September 2005, the history team believed that their existing practice already embodied the intentions of the PDP process and that the introduction of new forms of recording tutorial information might take up

time which they could more usefully spend dealing with students. This view was echoed in the meeting with students, who voiced similar anxieties about the potential additional burdens of the PDP process on their own time and that of their tutors.

176 In terms of final achievement, student results are comparable to national figures for history graduates, and external examiners confirm the equivalence of standards with those on comparable history programmes. The PQMR 2003-04 expressed some concern about the decline in the number of First class honours awards in the graduating cohort while noting the external examiner's endorsement of the standard of First class work at the University College. The history staff are encouraged to keep under review their use of the First class band and the distribution of marks at the Upper Second and First class boundaries in the light of comparative analysis with national data. Final destination data analysed in the PQMR demonstrated that history graduates were succeeding in entering a variety of employment fields and the audit team met several research students who had studied undergraduate history at the University College.

177 The PQMR and the DSED indicated a reflective and self-critical approach to quality assurance and enhancement by the history staff and this was borne out by the quality of the debate and discussion that the audit team had with both history staff and with students. The PQMR had received commendation as 'an excellent, detailed report' from the Faculty Quality panel and there was evidence in the report of consideration of external examiner and student comment, the raising of learning resources issues for consideration by the University College and commentary on the links between staff research activity and enhancement of the curriculum. A report on progress made with the previous year's action plan was included and a comprehensive action plan for the coming year was put forward. The team noted in particular the way in which history staff were introducing innovation into the curriculum, such as the restructuring of the order of period studies

in the first year and considering the student response to these changes and their impact on retention. The concern for the quality of the student experience and the thoughtful attempts to link programme development and content to the broader strategic goals of the University College encouraged the team to form the view that the innovative approach to the first year curriculum which is intended to improve the confidence and retention of students, is a feature of good practice.

178 The audit team examined the history assessment scheme and its application to a range of student work in all periods of study. A variety of assessment methods were in use and in discussions, students also emphasised continuing innovation in assessment methodology. In addition to seen and unseen examinations and the traditional essay, group presentations, oral presentations, document analysis, timed essays and final-year dissertations were all in use. These methods enabled the different elements of knowledge; subject specific skills such as primary source material analysis; historiographical interpretation and transferable skills such as oral presentation, to be tested appropriately.

179 Student written work sampled by the audit team demonstrated careful marking and appropriate use of grading and clarification. A standard feedback sheet was in use although it did not clearly relate marks awarded and comments made to the module learning outcomes. Staff pointed out that a more comprehensive feedback sheet and mark grid had been introduced in the current session. The team was able to confirm that this was the case in the meeting with students, where a student provided copies of her latest feedback pro formas. Double-marking and sample moderation is employed by history staff in accordance with University College assessment policy. External examiner reports confirm their satisfaction with marking standards and the quality of student work in relation to the tasks they are set.

180 History students benefit from a series of comprehensive 'essential guides' for each level of the programme which lay out clearly the

curriculum and assessment requirements together with study advice and a meticulous set of guidance notes on plagiarism and its avoidance. The essential guides are supplemented by more detailed individual course booklets with full teaching programmes, reading lists and assessment questions. There is cross reference to the University College regulations, procedures and resources in all of the above guides.

181 History students have the benefit of some dedicated learning resources provided in the Department and were particularly complimentary about the photocopied articles and specialist source material they could gain easy access to. The DSED; the departmental internal review and the PQMR noted that this specialist collection had been built up from the departmental budget to supplement material held in the main University College library. Staff and student opinion was quite critical of the budget devoted to library spending for history and this issue surfaced in meetings with the audit team and in the written documents, where, for example, the DSED noted this issue as 'a long-standing and current source of considerable concern both for tutors and students'. The history programme leader emphasised that there would always be pressure to increase library resources and that the subject received good support from the faculty liaison librarian who had helped to develop an electronic resources handbook for staff and student use. It was also acknowledged that history needed to develop the use of the VLE more comprehensively, building upon a pilot scheme which was currently being successfully undertaken.

182 With regard to other forms of support, students noted the usefulness of the Student Services Unit and gave examples of how they had been assisted with for example, unseen disabilities. The SSLC appeared to function effectively and course evaluations were used in accordance with University College procedures to test student satisfaction with teaching. The library resourcing issues which featured in the History SSLC had been followed up by history representatives in the University College Student

Forum meetings. They had also been taken up at the ISC by the history programme leader.

183 History has a number of research students who study both full- and part-time. Those students seen by the audit team were appreciative of the supervisory support they received from history staff and testified to there being an active research culture in the subject area. They had participated in the Graduate School's research student training programme but in one case, a more specialised history training programme had been followed outside the University College. The students had excellent access to inter-library loan facilities and could also use the University of Kent library as registered students of the university. Those students who were teaching in the Department had not had specific preparation for teaching (see paragraph 114 above) but had been given support and guidance by their supervisors and were participating in the history scheme for peer review of teaching. The students confirmed that they met their supervisors regularly and also had to make a written progress report annually and submit a special presentation to a panel when applying for transfer from MPhil to PhD. The team saw examples of completed pro formas both for annual progress and transfer and were able to confirm the appropriateness of the processes for monitoring research student progress. Moreover, the supervisory and monitoring arrangements in place for history research students were in line with the Graduate School's Handbook and Code of Practice for MPhil and PhD Students and Supervisors and were clearly feeding back into a University College wide system for assuring the quality of research degree programmes overseen by the Research Degrees Committee.

184 The overall view of the history provision tested by the audit team was one of confidence in the academic standards being achieved at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and in the quality of learning opportunities available to students. Staff are well-qualified and research active; there is good practice evident in the structuring of the first-year curriculum and its

relevance to the initial learning needs of students. There is also a general concern for the support of students from a broad range of study backgrounds, leading to sound progression and achievement outcomes. Research students are carefully supervised and monitored. Where issues have arisen which have an impact upon programme quality, notably the provision of sufficient library resources, staff have been assiduous both in ameliorative responses and representation of the issue at University College committees. The history provision maintains close alignment to subject benchmarks and national standards of achievement and carefully responds to wider University College initiatives on widening participation, contributing strongly to its mission and reputation.

185 The audit team confirmed that the quality of learning opportunities was appropriate for the programmes of study leading to the named awards.

Section 4: The audit investigations: published information

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

186 The 2004 SSS noted that 60.9 per cent of respondents regarded the prospectus as the major source of information which encouraged them to apply to study at the University College. There were high levels of satisfaction with the accuracy and helpfulness of the information in the prospectus and an overwhelming majority of students (97 per cent) surveyed regarded the Prospectus as easy to understand. There was less uniformity regarding whether the student experience once at the University College matched up to prior expectation; students in Health being less positive than those in the Business and Science, Arts and Humanities and Education. The SWS noted that these variations could possibly be attributed to timetable disruptions linked to the availability of teaching accommodation rather

than the accuracy of previously available published information.

187 Students who spoke to the audit team were overall very positive about the pre-entry information given to them, about the quality of website information and the more detailed programme handbook information they received. History students, for example, commented (see paragraph 180 above) upon the usefulness of the 'essential guides' that the Department provided them with for each year of the course and students from all departments noted that the University College routinely put new and updated information on the website. There was only one significant negative comment expressed to the team, referring to the accuracy of information made available to international students by agents in their home countries acting on behalf of the University College.

188 The audit team examined the current written and electronic information materials describing the Thanet campus and was satisfied that they were accurate and clear. They also examined information made available to international students and the contractual requirements placed upon agents. They were satisfied that the University College was doing all it could to make sure that agents acting on its behalf were given comprehensive official information and guidelines on their responsibilities. An Information Strategy guides the formulation and checking of written information and that which is placed on the website and there are satisfactory controls in place for ensuring the accuracy and currency of what is published in the University's College's name. The predominantly positive view of the quality of information in student surveys and among students with whom the team met gives confidence that the University College's published information is found to be useful and reliable by the student body.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

189 The SED described the procedures adopted by the University to meet the requirements of HEFCE's document, *Information*

on quality and standards in higher education (HEFCE 02/15) and its successor HEFCE 03/51, *Final guidance*. The institution considered that it was fully compliant with Part A of HEFCE 02/15, although it is continuing to develop its approach to the presentation of data on progression and completion and on aspects of the polling, analysis and response to student opinion. The audit team was able to confirm this compliance and to gain confidence in the progress that the University College is making towards meeting the requirements of HEFCE 03/51. An Information Officer was appointed to supervise the uploading of Teaching Quality Information (TQI) and the team noted the progress that had been made since the publication of the SED. Summaries of the external examiners reports are available on the TQI website, and the majority of programme specifications are now also available on line. A summary of the University College's Learning and Teaching Strategy has been prepared.

190 Overall, the audit team found that the University College had made good progress in meeting the requirements for published information and the audit team formed the view that there could be confidence about the University's procedures to ensure the accuracy, completeness and reliability of the information it publishes.

Findings

Findings

191 An institutional audit of Canterbury Christ Church University College (CCCUC, or the University College) was undertaken during the week 23 to 27 May 2005. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the University's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility as a UK degree-awarding body. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Standing Conference of Principals and Universities UK, three discipline audit trails (DATs) were selected for scrutiny at the level of an academic discipline. 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 CCCUC for enhancing current practice.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

192 CCCUC is an independent institution with an Anglican Foundation, offering a wide range of full and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses and a broadly-based research programme.

193 The Governing Body is responsible for the determination of the educational character and mission of the University College and for the oversight of its activities. The Academic Board is responsible for all aspects of the academic work of the University College and has established a number of committees to assist it in this task. Members of the Senior Management Team chair all of these committees. The Academic Standards Committee is responsible for the oversight of academic quality matters, supported by a team in the Academic Standards Unit. Academic leadership on quality matters is provided by the Vice Principal. Quality procedures are well documented, and are implemented within the faculties, supported by Faculty Quality Officers. Faculties discharge their collegiate responsibilities for academic quality through Faculty Quality Monitoring Committees.

194 The University College's approval, validation and revalidation processes are clearly defined and centralised. New course proposals and the revalidation of existing programmes are considered firstly by the faculty and then by the central Programme Proposals Sub-committee. Validation documents, including a programme specification, make appropriate reference to benchmarks and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The process also requires the support of the relevant dean, indicating commitment to resourcing the proposal. However, there are occasions where subsequent lack of resources has had a negative impact on the student learning. The audit team felt that academic planning and resource management are crucial to a high-quality student experience, and that the institution should continue to give high priority to the strategic planning of resources to reduce the occurrence of resource and demand mismatch.

195 Following an initial internal scrutiny event, the formal validation is chaired by a senior staff member and supported by at least two externals assessors. Responses to conditions of approval set at validation are required and are considered at Academic Board. Minor modifications to existing programmes are considered in a fast track process; however, it is possible for proposals to be considered at a small-scale validation event if the changes appear complex. Criteria for identification of small and large-scale events are not clear, and the audit team believes that it would be desirable to introduce a sharper set of criteria to define when small-scale and full course validation procedures should be followed. In addition they also feel that it would be desirable for the institution to introduce transparent procedures to ensure that external members of validation review panels are not open to potential conflicts of interest.

196 The processes for annual evaluation and monitoring, periodic review and internal review are clearly detailed. All programmes are required to produce an annual Programme Quality Monitoring Review. Faculty Quality

Monitoring Committees consider these reviews, together with external examiner reports and make formal comment to the Academic Standards Committee (ASC).

197 The quality monitoring and review processes working through the Academic Support Unit complement the more project-related activities led from the Quality Office. Similarly the programme-based quinquennial review is complemented by the more recent and broader internal review. The audit team did, however, come to the conclusion that there was potential for overlap and confusion amongst the staff of the institution.

198 The audit team formed the view from this evidence that it was desirable for the University College to complete the proposed review of internal committees/working group structures and their interrelationships, while retaining the benefits accrued from the delegation of quality processes to faculties.

199 CCCUC has a strong framework of student representation at programme, departmental and institutional levels, but bolsters this routine input from students with a triennial Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS). The latest SSS showed that the large majority of students were 'very satisfied' with the quality of their teaching and that the student body were in general happy with the institution's response to matters raised by students. The SSS covers all campuses and includes students on collaborative programmes and these students also gave a generally positive view of the student experience at the University College.

200 The University College is currently working actively with the Students' Union to explore issues raised in recent surveys. Committees and units such as the Information Services Committee and the Library Service pick up and respond to issues raised by students. The University College is aware of issues regarding availability of library books and other resources, and is working hard to remedy the situation. The institution is also planning to make additional estate available for learning resource provision.

201 At programme level, a standard student evaluation feedback form is employed effectively to elicit student opinion. Programmes where vocational relevance is important demonstrate strong links with professional bodies and employers, with practice-based programmes making significant use of practitioner and employer involvement. This feature is particularly strong in the continuing professional development programmes at Salomons. The dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester paid strong tribute to the University College's willingness to engage with the professional development agenda of theological training and the integration of the employer perspective into the academic curriculum. There was little evidence of feedback from graduates although research students and postgraduate students at Salomons did express satisfaction with their learning experiences at the University College.

202 The University College routinely makes use of a range of mechanisms for gaining feedback from stakeholders, and was using the outcomes of these processes to reflect seriously upon the strengths and weaknesses which were revealed.

203 All programmes are required to produce an annual Programme Quality Monitoring Report, as part of the annual review cycle managed by each faculty. The faculty monitoring committee reports annually to the ASC, specifically on responses made to external examiners' reports.

204 The University College's virtual learning environment (VLE), increasingly exploited within the institution, is also used to support students on a number of off-site programmes. The strategy to spread the use of the VLE recognises and accommodates the varying pace of take up within the different disciplines. Students, especially those studying part-time or on campuses at a distance from Canterbury, expressed considerable enthusiasm and support for the VLE. There are no quality criteria currently evident for VLE materials, and considerable flexibility is permitted. It was clear that where programmes made considerable use

of distance and e-learning material, then these materials were presented and considered during the validation for the programme.

205 A Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee of ASC addresses issues of general concern and strategy in relation to collaborative partnerships. Its membership comprises representatives of each of the major partners. Detailed procedures and guidance have been developed to assure the institution that the academic standards of all awards made under collaborative arrangements are equivalent to those in comparable programmes delivered solely by the University College.

206 The procedures detail the approach to be adopted for approval and development of a collaborative partnership. Assessment and moderation requirements are also described. The audit team reviewed an exemplar validation report which indicated the extent of the thoroughness and detailed review that the University College employs in addressing these quality aspects of its collaborative arrangements.

207 Overall responsibility for institutional oversight of these arrangements lies with the Manager of Academic Partnerships but each partnership has an academic home in a faculty and department. Links are therefore developed through cognate academic channels where, in the case of the larger partnerships, the programme directors are members of the staff of the University College. The arrangements adopted for managing the longstanding link with the YMCA George Williams College were unique, the College reporting centrally rather than through a faculty.

208 The audit team considered that collaborative arrangements were generally working effectively, with clear and open channels of communication being established and maintained. The team noted a case of immediate action taken by the University College to address a quality-related issue with one partner, and also action being taken to address an adequacy of learning resources. Examples of relevant and well-supported staff development activity, and work in support of students being undertaken by

various support services were noted. The team developed confidence that the quality of the University College's collaborative work was appropriately safeguarded.

209 The University College has in place processes to secure the quality and standards of all its programmes. It has audited its practice against the relevant sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA.

210 The findings of this audit confirm that broad confidence can be placed in the University's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards

211 The University College's processes of validation, annual review and periodic review sit at the heart of its academic quality procedures. The thorough implementation of these procedures provide a mechanism for the institution to assure itself of the standards of its awards.

212 The observations of external examiners are a crucial external peer input to the annual review processes at the University College. The use of external examiners embraces the precepts of the *Code of practice*. Heads of department nominate external examiners and, following approval at faculty level, the nomination is considered by the External Examiner Appointments Panel, which then makes recommendations to Academic Board. The University College provides a comprehensive induction for external examiners.

213 External examiners are required to judge the appropriateness and impartiality of assessment instruments, consistency of treatment of individual candidates, and comparability within the sector. The external examiner reports seen by the audit team were essentially supportive and expressed confidence in the assessment strategy and the supporting internal scrutiny processes. On receipt, external examiners' reports are given a wide distribution. Issues deemed to require

immediate attention are identified and referred to the head of department, programme director and others as appropriate. Cross-institutional issues are identified in an institutional summary report produced by the Academic Standards Unit (ASU), and faculties similarly produce their own action plans.

214 The University College has experienced problems with the quality of its data management systems and processes, which in turn had led to a lack of confidence in centrally held data. The audit team read of the steps taken to rectify the data quality concerns and heard from users of central data that the benefits of recent enhancements were being realised. Programme Directors and Deans also confirmed their role in the monthly checking process which had been instigated to generate more robust data.

215 The audit team read of the use of statistical data provided by the Registry for the purposes of the Annual Programme Quality Review Process. The data enable programmes to report on trends in student progression, achievement and retention. There was evidence from the DATs of programmes responding promptly and proactively to the data analysis to enhance quality and standards.

216 Overall the audit team formed the view that while there had been significant concern with data quality and management, the institution has taken appropriate steps to address these, to the extent that it now has statistical information which is of good quality. The team was also of the view that the institution was using data appropriately to evaluate quality and standards.

217 It was clear to the audit team from the information gathered and discussion with staff that the quality assurance arrangements at University College and local levels are well established and understood. The arrangements have significant strengths in terms of their comprehensiveness and integration. The findings of the team confirm that broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of University procedures for the current and future management of the standards of its awards.

The effectiveness of procedures for supporting learning

218 The University College has extensive and well-documented policies and procedures for the academic and personal support and guidance of students and for the provision of learning resources. There are a number of mechanisms for testing the response of students and staff to the provision of the various specialist services such as library and computing, and the SSS in particular gathers comprehensive user feedback which the University College considers and responds to using a publicly available action plan. Formal committees of the Academic Board provide effective means of monitoring, debating and shaping policy - for example in relation to widening participation; international students and the development of computing and electronic media. Finally, there is strategic oversight of the quality of the student experience through the senior post of Assistant Principal (Academic), although an ongoing review of senior management responsibilities may bring changes in the senior staff structure.

219 Academic support and guidance, including tutorial support and the quality of teaching are rated highly by the University College's students. While formal arrangements such as the personal tutor system and the staff-student liaison committees were viewed positively by all the students with whom the audit team met, it was the informal support and interest of staff in their progress which students commented upon most frequently. The care taken to induct students into degree level study through the imaginative structuring of the first year History curriculum was one such example of this care for student progress which the team viewed as an example of good practice.

220 Support for the personal and welfare needs of students is shared between the academic departments where the personal tutor is the first port of call and the specialist student services which are organised centrally. Student Services, including study skills support, welfare and international student guidance have all developed their professional capacity to support a large and more diverse student body and there

are imaginative innovations such as the orientation website to aid students in settling into their higher education studies. The Widening Participation and Retention Strategy seeks to encourage progression of all students, regardless of academic and personal background and there is evidence that it is having some positive impact on progression rates.

221 A significant feature of the University College's Widening Participation Strategy is the development of new campuses at Thanet and Medway. This geographical diversification has demanded new methods of provision of student support and guidance. There was evidence from the DATs, from examining the published information available to students and from meetings with staff and students that provision of student support at Thanet and Medway was being managed effectively. A key development in this respect has been the appointment of Campus Directors and Campus Tutors who can coordinate the provision of student services at the outlying campuses and provide a focal point of support for students studying there. Equally, where appropriate, academic departments require tutors who teach on the main Canterbury campus to also teach at the outlying campuses thus helping to maintain a clear academic identity between Department and students regardless of their location. Although relatively new, there was evidence that the new developments at Thanet and Medway are being planned effectively. The University College is therefore committed to offering a student experience which will deliver equivalent levels of personal and academic support regardless of campus location. The existence of a comprehensive range of student support initiatives contributing to the quality of students' learning experience was considered to be an example of good practice.

222 The University College's collaborative arrangements, although modest in terms of total student numbers, display some complexity, embracing links with the dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester, the specialist YMCA George Williams College and a range of partner further education colleges engaged in Foundation

Degree and HNC/D provision as part of the widening participation strategy. A meeting with staff from the various partner institutions as well as the study of agreements and information documentation enabled the audit team to assure itself that University College standards of academic and personal support and learning resource provision were being applied consistently. The appointment of a Manager of Academic Partnerships to coordinate collaborative arrangements was a positive feature of the increasing coordination and systematisation of the University's College's collaborative procedures. The team formed the opinion that the commitment to working with partners and across a number of campuses and the maintenance, during a period of considerable institutional expansion, of a strong, collegiate environment across the campuses and partner colleges was a feature of good practice.

223 The quality of teaching staff who support student learning was evident from the outcomes of recent developmental engagements and subject reviews, as well as from the curricula vitae of staff made available to the audit team. Academic staff were well supported in their professional and scholarly development by a very comprehensive staff development strategy and a system of small grants for study leave. The Investor in People status held by the University College also confirmed the rigour of the procedures in place for supporting and developing both academic and other professional staff. One significant exception to the thorough and comprehensive support for teaching quality was the somewhat loose arrangement for preparing research students with teaching commitments for their professional responsibilities. Although some progress had been made since this issue was raised in the 1996 report, the team was not satisfied that the University College had yet put in place clear and consistent procedures for ensuring the quality of research students contribution to teaching and supporting learning, and advise the institution to implement a policy to ensure that research students receive full preparatory training before taking up teaching responsibilities.

224 The University College's self-evaluation document (SED) noted frankly and openly some difficulties with maintaining the quality and sufficiency of learning resources in particular the supply of library books and journals and the availability of sufficient study space on the Canterbury campus for library and computer use. In discussions with the audit team, senior managers acknowledged that this was the area of greatest student concern, as was also evident from committee minutes, programme monitoring reports and the SSS. They also recognised that this situation was partly a result of successful student recruitment and expansion. Senior managers, including the Principal, were able to assure the team that strategies were in place to address the issue of learning resource and study space deficiencies and that this issue was given due consideration in Academic Board committee and senior management discussions on planning and resourcing. Evidence cited included the annual increase in learning resources budgets over the last two years, greater use of electronic media, including the VLE, Blackboard, as a supportive resource for student learning and the imminent purchase of a building in Canterbury for planned conversion to a new Learning Resources Centre. The team acknowledged that the University College's senior management was giving due strategic priority to the issue of learning resources provision. They would, however, wish to advise continuous monitoring of the effectiveness of the strategic planning of learning resources by the University College, in order to maintain the quality of the student experience in a period of expansion and diversification.

Outcomes of discipline audit trails

Computer science

225 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 programmes was appropriate to the title of the awards and their location in the FHEQ. The programme specifications are informed by the relevant *Subject benchmark statement* for

computing. The Department recognises there needs to be further development of the professional, social, legal and ethical issues to achieve their aim of gaining professional body accreditation. Development in this area would also enhance and strengthen the degree programmes within the context of the *Subject benchmark statement* for computing. The Department maintains strong links and coordination of programmes delivered in partner organisations.

226 Students provide detailed feedback on each course delivery and contribute fully to the staff student liaison committees in the Department. Scheduling of assessment activity featured strongly as an issue at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and the department has responded by introducing a tighter programme level control of the assessment calendar. Overall, based on the available evidence, the audit team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for the taught programmes of study leading to the named awards.

Sport science

227 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 programmes was appropriate to the title of the awards and their location in the FHEQ. The programme specifications included clear reference to the *Subject benchmark statement* for hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism. The Department has responded to the changing national environment with the introduction of work-based programmes of study.

228 The meeting with students indicated a high degree of confidence in the willingness of the Department to respond to matters of concern. A particular feature was the use of focus groups to elicit student feedback. Physical resources currently place some restrictions on the programmes in the area, but plans are in hand to address these. Based on the available evidence, the audit team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to

students was suitable for the taught programmes of study leading to the named awards of the department.

History

229 From its discussions with staff and students and from study of students' assessed work, the audit team reached the conclusion that the standard of student achievement was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ. The programme specifications set out appropriate educational aims and learning outcomes, and describe teaching, learning and assessment styles which aim to build the students' confidence. This was particularly noteworthy in the first year of study, and was considered an example of good practice. Programme specifications have been written in the context of the *Subject benchmark statement* for history.

230 Student evaluation of the programmes was broadly positive, especially regarding the provision of comprehensive student guides. Research students were used as part-time teaching staff, although training for this role was rare. The audit team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the undergraduate and taught postgraduate awards in history.

The institution's use of the Academic Infrastructure

231 The University College stated that it takes a wide range of external reference points into account during academic planning and when measuring its achievements. In particular it explained how it had considered and incorporated all sections of the *Code of practice* into its policies and procedures. On receipt of sections of the *Code*, they are passed to the most appropriate committee or person to action and monitor. The ASC maintains institutional oversight of progress in their implementation.

232 With regard to the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and programme specifications, alignment is assured through the processes of validation, annual review and

periodic review. At subject level, the audit team found that staff were aware of relevant subject benchmark statements and have made appropriate use of them in constructing programme content.

233 The University College is also subject to external appraisal by a number of external agencies and professional bodies. The University College, in its consideration of these reports, identified good practice and matters, which, unless rectified might have led to problems for the institution in pursuit of its mission.

234 The audit team concluded that the University operated effective policies for ensuring the Academic Infrastructure was implemented into its quality and standards framework, promulgated within the institution and applied by the body of the staff at both institutional, and where appropriate, subject levels.

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

235 The SED contained a comprehensive review of the structures and processes the University College has in place to manage its quality and standards in a time of growth and evolution. It included detailed and helpful references to supporting documentation. It also contained a self-evaluation of changing processes, identifying the many strengths of the quality assurance and enhancement framework, actions taken following the previous audit and developmental engagements, and areas for further development to enhance future quality and standards. There were, however, areas in the SED which were unclear to the audit team, especially the relationships between the Quality Office and the ASU.

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

236 The University College's Strategic Plan commits to enhancing the quality of the

experience provided for students and staff. The Learning and Teaching Policy is seen as being crucial to this change, aiming to achieve 'excellence in education', a principle that lies at the heart of the mission statement. Oversight of learning and teaching rests with the deans, with leadership of the planning and delivery of programmes being the responsibility of heads of departments and programme leaders. The Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit carries significant responsibilities for the development and enhancement of all aspects of pedagogy. The unit is supported by faculty-based Learning and Teaching Coordinators and Learning Technologists.

237 In setting out enhancement plans for the future, the University College aims to build on acknowledged strengths of present systems, but also to exploit its 'corporate self-awareness' by being ready to address areas where improvement is required. The institution has identified a number of areas for improvement:

238 The audit team noted that the University College had in place mechanisms for identifying good practice, and through both academic management channels and central support units had opportunities to spread and develop such practice throughout the institution.

The reliability of information

239 Both from the direct evidence available to the audit team in printed and electronic publications, and in its meetings with staff and students, it was evident that the University College is strongly committed to clear and effective communications.

240 Extensive information is provided to students, who were generally satisfied by the extent, accuracy and quality of the information they received. With the support of its students, the University is migrating much information from printed media to the internet, intranet and VLE. The audit team was satisfied that the information provided by the University to its students both in print and on its website was well presented and readily accessible.

241 The University has ensured that it is meeting the requirements of HEFCE's document 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance*, including the production of accurate statistical information and the development of external examiner summaries, and the outcomes of periodic review. The audit team is confident that the University is meeting the full requirements.

Features of good practice

242 The following features of good practice were noted:

- i the maintenance, during a period of considerable institutional expansion, of a strong, collegiate environment across the campuses and partner colleges (see paragraph 42)
- ii the comprehensive range of student support initiatives contributing to the quality of students' learning experience (see paragraph 128)
- iii the innovative approach to the first year curriculum which is intended to improve the confidence and retention of students, which became evident in the course of the history DAT (see paragraph 177).

Recommendations for action

243 Recommendations for action that is advisable:

- i monitor the effectiveness of strategic planning of resources, to secure effective forecasting and management of the demands of academic developments, therefore maintaining the quality of the learning experience (see paragraphs 52, 124)
- ii implement a policy to ensure that research students receive full preparatory training before taking up teaching responsibilities (see paragraphs 114,183).

244 Recommendations for action that is desirable:

- iii complete the proposed review of internal committees/working group structures and their interrelationships, while retaining the benefits accrued from the delegation of quality processes to faculties (see paragraphs 39, 44, 55)
- iv amend the pro forma for the nomination of external assessors to validation review panels to ensure the identification of potential conflicts of interest (see paragraph 54)
- v clarify the criteria for defining small-scale validations (see paragraph 59).

Appendix

Canterbury Christ Church University's response to the audit report

Canterbury Christ Church University welcomes the report on the Institutional Audit and its conclusion that broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the University's management of academic quality and the standards of its awards. The report reinforces the confidence with which the institution approaches its further development following confirmation of University title in July 2005.

We welcome the commendation of the comprehensive range of student support initiatives. Coupled with the positive comments on the teaching staff (eg para 223) this attests to a quality of experience for students that is very important in a teaching-led institution. We are also pleased to see particular commendation of a strong collegiate environment. It is a feature which we have striven to maintain as the institution has grown, diversified and spread geographically and which we intend to preserve as a distinctive characteristic in keeping with our mission. We note, too, the identification of good practice in an innovative approach to the first year programme in History. The University does seek to encourage innovation and responsiveness to student need in all its programmes and will continue to do so.

As noted by the audit team, the University is in the process of restructuring its senior management arrangements, occasioned by retirement of four members, and this reflects particularly upon the first recommendation for action that is advisable: monitoring the effectiveness of strategic planning of resources. The establishment of a senior post of Strategic Director of Resources, supported by a new Director of Finance, has strengthened this area. Work has been ongoing for some time on a computerised resource allocation model, based on detailed student number data, and it is intended that this should be operational by September 2006. Restructuring will be completed early in 2006 with the appointment of the new Deputy Vice Chancellor, responsible for leading academic planning and development, ensuring all resource consequences are identified, and for the Planning Office.

The University has strengthened its provision to prepare research students for teaching and will ensure that all full-time students engage with this in their first year, before teaching. Additionally, on-line materials for new teaching staff are being adapted for the needs of research students.

While recognising significant strengths in the comprehensiveness and integration of our quality assurance arrangements, the audit team recommends that the proposed review of internal committees/working groups is completed. We confirm that we will do so, taking into account the specific comments contained in the report, with the aim of implementing revised arrangements in September 2006.

Finally, we confirm that the recommendations to amend the pro forma for nominating external assessors and to clarify the criteria for defining small scale validations have been implemented, subject to approval by the appropriate committees.

We thank the Agency for the professional and positive spirit with which the audit was conducted, and appreciate the detailed commentary, both on the points of particular strength in our provision and on matters where action is recommended. The actions fit comfortably with plans already in hand.

