Queen Mary, University of London

NOVEMBER 2004

Institutional audit

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Preface

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

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

The purpose of institutional audit

The aims of institutional audit are to meet the public interest in knowing that universities and colleges are:
- providing HE, awards and qualifications of an acceptable quality and an appropriate academic standard
- 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 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 02/15 *Information on quality and standards in higher education,* published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The audit team reviews progress towards meeting this requirement.

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Summary

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited Queen Mary, University of London (the College) from 15 to 19 November 2004 to carry out an institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the academic quality and the academic standards of the awards that the College offers on behalf of the University of London, which formally awards the College's degrees.

To arrive at its conclusions the audit team read a wide range of documents relating to the way the School manages the academic aspects of its provision. Members of the team also met members of staff and current students throughout the School.

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 is that:

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

Features of good practice

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

- the clear, comprehensive yet concise nature of the Quality Assurance Handbook

- student membership of internal (periodic) review panels

- the responsive and, simultaneously, strategic role of Educational and Staff Development in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning across the institution

- the Drapers' Company Awards for excellence in teaching and especially the process of receiving nominations from staff-student liaison committees

- the development and implementation of undergraduate progress files in dentistry

- the guidelines on quality assurance of, and issues related to, the provision of distance learning produced by the Department of Electronic Engineering and the work of the Open Distance Learning Unit (ODL) more generally

- the various institutional and departmental initiatives related to the integration of key and transferable skills into the curriculum.

Recommendations for action

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

The team advises the College to:

- keep under review application of the recently introduced methods for classifying degrees

- review the most effective means for the identification and tracking of priorities for action in annual reports on teaching

- ensure that its intention of relating qualification level descriptors to learning outcomes is completed, and applied to all programme levels.

It would be desirable for the College to:

- reflect on the arrangements for quality assuring collaborative programmes and, in particular, the practice to commence a programme prior to finalising collaborative agreements

- review College policy on the timeliness of feedback on student work

- consider whether a more standardised nomenclature for faculty quality structures would assist in the effective dissemination of good practice

- review the different arrangements for student access to the intranet.

Discipline audit trails

With the intention of reporting on how well the College's procedures are working at the discipline level, the audit team looked in some detail at the following programmes within three discipline audit trails (engineering, economics and computer science): MEng Aerospace Engineering; BSc Computer Aided Engineering; BSc (Eng) Engineering;

BSc (Eng) Engineering with Business Management; BEng Engineering Science; MSc Medical Electronics and Physics; BSc Economics; BSc Economics and Politics; MSc Economics; MSc Financial Economics; MSc Software Engineering; MSc Advanced Methods in Computer Science; and BSc Computer Science, including ODL. As well as contributing to the overall broad confidence statement noted above, the team concluded that the standard of student achievement in these programmes was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The team also concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students on those programmes was suitable for the awards.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings the audit team also investigated the use made by the 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 help define both good practice and academic standards. The findings of the audit suggest that the College has responded appropriately to the subject benchmark statements, and the *Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA, while noting that the College is still developing its approach to some aspects of the FHEQ and programme specifications.

From 2005, the audit process will include a check on the reliability of the information about academic standards and academic quality published by institutions in a standard format (see HEFCE's document 03/15, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance*). At the time of the audit the College was making significant progress towards fulfilling its responsibilities in this area. The College is awaiting the outcome of the development of the proposed national graduate survey before attempting to gather feedback from recent graduates for publication.

Main report

Main Report

1   An institutional audit of Queen Mary, University of London (the College) was undertaken during the week commencing 15 November 2004. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the College's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility for the degrees of the University of London.

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

3   The audit checked the effectiveness of the College's procedures for establishing and maintaining the standards of its academic awards; for reviewing and enhancing the quality of the programmes of study leading to those awards; for publishing reliable information; and for the discharge of its responsibility for conferring degrees of the University of London. 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 three discipline audit trails (DATs), together with examples of those processes operating at the level of the institution as a whole. The scope of the audit encompassed all of the College's provision including collaborative arrangements leading to its awards.

Section 1: Introduction: Queen Mary, University of London

The institution and its mission

4   Four colleges form the roots of the College: Queen Mary College; Westfield College; the London Hospital Medical College; and St Bartholomew's Hospital College. The first of these began its life as the People's Palace Technical Schools, a philanthropic endeavour sponsored by the Drapers' Company to provide East Londoners with education and social activities. This was renamed the East London College in 1902 and admitted to the University of London in 1915. Its Royal Charter was presented in 1934 by

Queen Mary, and renamed as Queen Mary College. Westfield College was founded in 1882 as a pioneering college for the education of women, and merged with Queen Mary College in 1989. The London Hospital Medical College, established in 1785, was England's first medical school. St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College was established in 1843. The two medical colleges merged with Queen Mary and Westfield College in 1995 and, in 2000, the College's Council approved the working name of Queen Mary, University of London.

5   The College has four main campuses: Mile End (the base for all non-clinical academic services, central services and administration); Whitechapel; West Smithfield; and Charterhouse Square. The Mile End Campus has undergone extensive development in recent years including a new Student Village with 1,000 ensuite study rooms and self-catering facilities.

6   The College is part of the University of London, which is the degree-awarding body. At the time of the audit, therefore, the College was responsible for the quality management of all aspects of its pre-degree, undergraduate and taught postgraduate provision, and the academic standards of the associated awards, while the University of London retains responsibility for administering research degree awards. The College derives its authority to award degrees from the Ordinances of the University. Ordinance 15 of the University describes in detail the matters which must be included in regulations made by the College in respect of University awards for which it is responsible. These include conditions for admission, the structure of the programme, the methods and timings of assessment, duties of examination boards and (both external and/or intercollegiate) examiners and the conditions which must be met for the award of the degree. The College regulations and Quality Assurance Handbook (QA Handbook) must be lodged with the University. In addition, as part of its Charter the College has the authority to award its own diplomas and certificates.

7   In October 2004, the College had 7,561 undergraduate students and 1,843 postgraduate students. The proportion of part-time undergraduate students was 5.5 per cent and the full-time proportion was 94.5 per cent. For postgraduate students the ratio was 18.5 per cent part-time and 81.5 per cent full-time. In 2003-04, 21 per cent of the students were from outside of the UK and 63 per cent of students were from ethnic minority groups.

8   The governing body of the College is its Council, which comprises 30 members including four ex officio members, six appointed members, nine

elected staff members, one elected student member (in addition to the President of the Students' Union (SU) who is an ex officio member) and 10 coopted external members. The chairman is appointed by the Council from among its external members.

9   The Principal's Steering Group (PSG) is effectively the senior management team for the College. The PSG consists of the Principal and vice-principals, together with the Director of Resources and the Director of Human Resources. It meets weekly and sets the College agenda, coordinating its business, preparing recommendations for committees and assisting the Principal in making executive decisions. The PSG does not publish any minutes. Selected papers from The PSG are considered by the Senior Manager Advisory Group (SMAG) which includes student representatives. The SMAG has no decision-making power.

10   Students are registered for a programme of study leading to a qualification of the University of London (all degree programmes) or of the College (most diploma and certificate programmes). Degree programmes are either 'unitary' or 'course unit'. Each unitary programme has its own regulations, and leads to a single named qualification. It may be organised on a modular basis, but the choice of modules will be structured and governed by the regulations. Course unit programmes operate under the Course Unit Scheme. Each programme is composed of separately assessed course units, and the eventual title of the degree reflects the combination of units the student has passed. One set of regulations applies to all course unit programmes.

11   The College has three academic sectors: the School of Medicine and Dentistry (SMD), Science and Engineering, and the Humanities and Social Sciences. The SMD is divided into six institutes, while the Humanities and Social Sciences, and Science and Engineering sectors each contain two faculties: Arts and Law and Social Sciences, and Engineering and Mathematical Sciences and Natural Sciences respectively. Below the level of the School or Faculty there is no uniformity as to whether an academic unit is called a department, school, centre or institute. (Henceforth, this report uses 'department' to cover all academic units below the level of the faculty or School.)

12   The self-evaluation document (SED) stated that the College's general policy of introducing new programmes was to build upon its strengths, to identify niche markets and to establish collaborative ventures. The College has introduced new methods of programme delivery including problem-based learning, new types of programmes including

Foundation Degrees, and is rapidly expanding its range of distance-learning programmes. It has also established an E-Learning Policy Group with the aim of keeping 'up to date with developments in e-learning' as well as making recommendations on the development of e-learning, advising on pedagogic and technical issues related to e-learning and promoting best practice.

13   In 2002-03 the SMD underwent significant restructuring. This involved reorganising eight divisions into six institutes while preserving the Education Directorate's responsibility for managing undergraduate teaching delivery. As part of this process, all academic staff in the School were assessed and categorised as either Principal Investigators or Teaching and Research Staff. The SED stated that this restructuring was 'a painful process' but resulted in 'a leaner and fitter sector which is financially viable'. In 2003 the College took the decision to cease teaching undergraduate chemistry 'due to the lack of funds to invest in necessary teaching laboratories coupled with the relatively high cost of teaching poorly qualified students'. The SED stated that 'more changes may be needed in the next few years'.

14   The SED stated that the College's mission, which was approved in 1999, is 'to position [the College] across a range of measures of research performance, in the top decile of UK Universities; to achieve and sustain a reputation for teaching excellence and innovation that ensures a buoyant student intake in both quality and quantity; to develop and sustain a corporate image which reflects the quality of the research, teaching, facilities and environment of the College; to support the above through efficient cost-effective administrative structures'. The College is currently reviewing its mission statement. The College's Strategic Plan for 2001 to 2006 is also being reviewed because, according to the SED, most of the 'priorities have either been achieved or are being implemented'.

Collaborative provision

15   The SED identified two types of collaborative provision: those with the National Health Service (NHS) and those with other higher education colleges or further education colleges (FECs). In the case of the former, two of the campuses are intermixed with the premises of the Barts and The London NHS Trust. The College has a formal strategic alliance with City University which covers three joint taught programmes. There are also many collaborative arrangements with other colleges of the University of London, including a joint MSc in Freshwater and Coastal Sciences with University College London, and

the College is cooperating with Royal Holloway on the future development of the University of London's British Institute in Paris. From 2005 the College intends to run Foundation Degrees courses in Biomedical Sciences, Forensic Science and in Computing with Business. These programmes will be delivered at three local FECs: City and Islington, Tower Hamlets and Sir George Monoux College.

16   The SED stated that although there are 'no formal collaborative arrangements for joint teaching with overseas institutions', strong links with some universities in China do exist and partnerships are being considered. It also noted that while the current situation is that Chinese students come to London to study, 'this is developing into distance-learning or joint degrees delivered in China'. At the time of the audit visit this had been formalised so that students will be based in China for all of their studies, but in line with Chinese Government policy this would not take the form of distance learning. The Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Unit, based in the Department of Computer Science, has a partnership with the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education and the Department of Electronic Engineering, Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications. The arrangements underpinning the management and enhancement of standards and quality of collaborative programmes are considered in more detail later in this report (see paragraphs 144 to 149).

Background information

17   The audit team had access to the following published information:

- *Quality Audit Report* (March 2001) published by QAA

- subject review reports published by QAA

- undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses.

18   The College provided the audit team with:

- an institutional SED, appendices and referenced material

- discipline self-evaluation documents (DSEDs) for the three areas selected for DATs

- professional, regulatory and statutory body (PRSB) reports from the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) (now part of the Higher Education Academy (HEA)), the Institution of Mechanical Engineering, The Royal Aeronautical Society, the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining, Institution of Electrical Engineers, and the Royal Society of Chemistry

- Strategic Plan 2001 to 2006.

During both the briefing visit and the audit visit the audit team was greatly aided in its work by the College making available a large number of internal documents. Many of these were often available in both hard copy and on the College's intranet. The team also had access to the two confidential developmental engagement reports produced by QAA during 2002-04.

The audit process

19   A preliminary meeting between the QAA officer and representatives of the College and the SU was held at the College in February 2004. Informed by this, QAA confirmed that three DATs would be conducted during the audit visit. Based upon their initial reading of the institutional SED the audit team selected computing science, economics and engineering as the three DATs.

20   At the preliminary meeting College students were invited, through their SU, to submit a students' written submission (SWS) expressing views on the student experience at the College, and identifying any matters of concern or commendation with respect to the quality of programmes and the standard of awards. They were also invited to give their views on the level of representation afforded to them, and on the extent to which their views on standards and quality were taken into account by the College. In August 2004, the SU submitted the SWS to QAA. It had been prepared by members of the SU, and was based on a student questionnaire, focus groups and other data. The SU indicated that the SWS had been shared with institutional staff and that there were no matters within it that would require the audit team to treat it with any level of confidentiality greater than that normally applyied to the audit process. The team is grateful to the students for preparing this valuable document to support the audit.

21   QAA received the institutional SED and supporting documentation in August 2004, and the DSEDs in October 2004. The SED and two of the DSEDs were written specifically for the audit.

22   The audit team undertook a briefing visit to the College on 13 and 14 October 2004. The purpose of the briefing visit was to explore with the Principal, senior members of staff and student representatives matters relating to the management and enhancement of quality and standards raised by the SED and other documentation provided for the team, and the SWS. During this visit, the team signalled a number of themes for the audit visit. At the close of the briefing visit, a programme of meetings for the audit visit was developed by the team and agreed with the College.

23   The audit visit took place from 15 to 19 November 2004 and included further meetings with staff and students of the University, both at central level and in relation to the selected DATs.

24   The audit team comprised Dr S Billingham, Professor J Gowlett, Dr R Griffith-Jones and Dr T A Rafik, auditors, and Miss K J Evans, audit secretary. The audit was coordinated for QAA by Dr A J Biscoe, Assistant Director, Reviews Group.

Developments since the previous academic quality audit

25   The College was last subject to an academic quality audit by QAA in 2001. The audit gave rise to commendations relating to the accuracy and critical insights of its Analytical Account; the personal tutoring systems, especially those developed by the SMD; the thorough approach to reviewing its disabilities and special learning needs in light of the precepts of the *Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of Practice*), published by QAA; the work of its students in the HEADSTART programme; and the contribution of the College's staff-student liaison committees (SSLCs) to the quality management of the College.

26   The audit report also identified points for further consideration by the College. These included reviewing its committee arrangements with a view to securing a greater degree of consistency; undertaking a further scrutiny of the remit of Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC), including the balance between its strategic and operational functions; establishing a consistent membership for faculty boards and broadening their remit to include some responsibility for monitoring the work of departmental graduate studies committees; reviewing its arrangements for external examining; systematically gathering information about external developments relating to the management of quality and academic standards and ensuring that information on these matters is more effectively disseminated within the College; developing level descriptors; improving the effectiveness and rigour of external scrutiny of new programmes at the development and approval stage; reviewing the practices of its examination boards with a view, inter alia, to harmonising their use of numerical identifiers for assessment and examination candidates in the interests of fairness; reviewing the wide range of methods used for the classification of undergraduate degrees, with a view to promoting greater consistency and equity; reviewing the management of those processes which lead to the award of research degrees, particularly those concerned with decisions associated with the admission and upgrading of

registration to PhD, together with its provision of research training for postgraduate research students.

27   In addition, the report recommended that the College might like to consider the desirability of clarifying and formalising links for matching requirements for learning resources to the needs of such developments as part of its programme approval procedures; enhancing arrangements to share good practice in personal tutoring arrangements between departments; ensuring that heads of department are apprised of their responsibilities in the College's new appointments process before they are fully implemented; keeping the effectiveness of its probation arrangements under review; building on its present staff development and appraisal arrangements to ensure that it has a formal means of monitoring their effectiveness; enhancing its present arrangements for providing information on action taken in response to students, including research and intercollegiate students, in its feedback arrangements and the merits of introducing a college-wide Students' Charter.

28   The SED stated that the QEC had 'considered each of the recommendations in detail and decided on responses', and that these were again reviewed in 2003 to assess progress. Key actions taken included asking departments through their annual reports (ARs) for 2001-02, to review their local level committee structure with a view to ensuring its continued effectiveness; asking departments to ensure that a guide to the departmental committee structure is included in a departmental staff handbook; a review of the strategic and operational functions of QEC; offering guidance on level descriptors to all staff developing new taught programmes of study and all programmes leading to a new award to use external scrutiny at the approval stage. According to the SED, the College has reviewed its methods of classification for honours degrees in response to external examiners' criticisms. Also, new guidelines have been prepared regarding the method by which joint honours students are classified to ensure that students on joint programmes are considered as a cohort in their own right. The SED stated that for some recommendations the likely outcomes did not justify implementing them.

29   Since the 2001 *Quality Audit Report* the College has undergone subject reviews in economics and politics which resulted in published reports, and developmental engagements in history and chemistry. The outcomes of these reports are considered in paragraph 88.

30   Since 2001 the following disciplines have been subject to external accreditation: medicine, dentistry, law, engineering, electronic engineering, computer science, materials, chemistry and the

Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP). For a brief analysis of the outcomes of these reports see paragraph 89.

31   The audit team's view of the actions taken since the last audit is that, although significant progress has been made, there are still areas that need further attention. These include the use of level descriptors, method of classification of honours degrees and clarification of the responsibility for quality.

Section 2: The audit investigations: institutional processes

The institution's view as expressed in the SED

32   The SED stated that the College's 'quality framework is based on the principle that all staff have responsibility for maintaining and improving the quality of the College's provision. Responsibility for assuring quality rests equally with all stakeholders, including lecturers, heads of department, departmental teaching committees, faculty boards and the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC)'. The QA Handbook outlines the principles underpinning quality assurance including self-monitoring, review and report as one of the main characteristics along with an emphasis on quality management as 'a continual process' which operates within a college-wide system of procedures to promote shared understanding of basic requirements. Consistency of standards and procedures is achieved through coordination by the Quality Assurance Unit (QA Unit) and senior College officers.

33   According to the QA Handbook, the key quality assurance processes are 'programme approval, amendment and withdrawal, course approval, amendment and withdrawal, annual monitoring (AR on teaching), external examiner nomination and appointment [and] external examiner reports'.

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

34   The College's Charter identifies the Academic Board (AB) as the body responsible for the academic work of the College. Under the Charter, the AB is responsible to the Council for all aspects of the award of degrees, diplomas and certificates offered by the College, advising the Principal on the monitoring and maintenance of academic standards, approval of new programmes of study, procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of programmes and for providing a systematic review of programmes. The AB is

supported in its work by the following committees: QEC, Student Services Board (SSB), Examinations and Assessment Committee (EAC), Widening Access Committee and the Research Board. All but the last of these two committees are chaired by the Vice-Principal (Academic Policy), with the express aim of ensuring that 'policy issues are considered but not duplicated'. In effect much of the work of the AB is done in these committees. The administrative coordination of the College's quality assurance framework is undertaken by the QA Unit.

35   The SED stated that QEC is 'the principal body dealing with academic quality issues'. Its terms of reference include developing and maintaining college-wide quality assurance and enhancement procedures and codes of practice, and ensuring these meet external requirements and expectations. QEC, therefore, maintains oversight of internal review, considers ARs on undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, the appointment of external examiners and consideration of their reports and responses to them by departments or subject areas, and monitoring action taken by faculty and school boards in relation to issues raised by ARs and those of external examiners.

36   QEC also maintains oversight of collaborative provision. QEC is supported in its work by the Teaching and Learning Quality Enhancement Group (TLQEG) which is responsible for overseeing the PGCAP, advising on the training and professional development needs of all staff involved in teaching, learning and assessment, monitoring implementation at departmental level of the College Teaching and Learning Strategy, facilitating dissemination of best practice, experience and innovation in teaching, learning and assessment and overall, to enhance quality of teaching and learning across all disciplines. TLQEG comprises the Vice-Principal (Academic Policy); two academic staff members from each of the three College academic sectors; the Director of Educational and Staff Development (ESD); the Heads of the QA Unit and of Learning Development Unit (LDU) (each ex officio); the Director of PGCAP and the Teaching Quality Adviser as coopted members.

37   The SSB has been created to advise the Principal and AB on any matters relating to the general welfare of students. Its membership includes six student representatives, the Vice-Principal with responsibilities for Student Affairs, the Dean for Student Affairs in SMD, the heads of Careers and Advice and Counselling, and six academic staff involved in advising students.

38   In 2002 the College established the EAC to coordinate policy on examination matters and to act as an interface between degree examination boards and the AB, to which it reports. Since 2003 the Graduate School Management Committee is responsible for overseeing research degrees. It reports via the Research Board to the AB. The Widening Access Committee has recently been established to coordinate the College's approach to widening access.

39   The AB has delegated responsibility for approving proposals for new programmes and units of study, amendments to or withdrawal of existing ones, to faculty boards and, in the case of SMD, the School Education Board. The boards are chaired by academic deans or, in the case of SMD, the Chair of the School Board. It is the responsibility of QEC to monitor this process and satisfy itself that it is working smoothly and appropriately. QEC receives at each meeting a list of programmes and units of study approved, modified or withdrawn by faculty and school boards and, from time to time, reports from chairs of faculty and school boards on academic quality issues.

40   Responsibility for quality assurance of collaborative provision, other than University of London intercollegiate degrees which are governed by University Ordinances, is overseen by QEC. Responsibility for quality and standards rests with the institution carrying out the majority of the teaching. Where teaching is shared equally a formal agreement on responsibility is required. In such cases responsibility for programme approval and amendment, monitoring and review, dealing with external examiner reports, programme management including student representation, provision of information to students, student guidance and support mechanisms must be agreed. For further information regarding the management and enhancement of standards and quality for collaborative programmes see paragraphs 144 to 149.

41   The College's 'framework of procedures….for the quality assurance and enhancement of its educational provision' is contained in the QA Handbook. The Handbook is available electronically and in hard copy, and includes an overview of the quality assurance framework. It describes and explains the key procedures relating to quality assurance in clear, concise yet comprehensive terms, and the audit team considered it as an example of good practice. In support of the QA Handbook more detailed information on the framework or procedures including pro formas, notes and guidance are available on the College's intranet, which also contains the most up to date version of the procedures.

42   The QA Unit, located within Registry, services QEC and liaises with faculty and school boards on quality assurance issues. It organises and provides support for internal and external reviews, and has a remit to provide advice and guidance, and to monitor submissions for new programmes and units, external examiner nominations and their reports, and preparation of ARs. The audit team was told that in these functions the QA Unit pays particular regard to the Academic Infrastructure, the ordinances of the University and best practice in quality assurance nationally.

43   The College acknowledged that its approach to quality assurance depends on effective systems at department level, but also stated that in order to achieve the goal of greater local ownership of these processes and to acknowledge the different professional and academic requirements of subject disciplines, it considered it inappropriate to impose a central quality framework. Evidence seen by the audit team confirmed that departments do have different committee names, structures and practices for progressing and reporting key aspects of quality assurance into the faculty and school boards. There are a number of different names for committees carrying out broadly the same functions, with similar responsibilities and remits, across different departments. This potentially adds a layer of complexity for communicating across the institution about quality assurance matters. While acknowledging that devolved structures for managing quality and standards should recognise local needs, the team encourage the College to consider whether the variation in committee structures, names and identified responsibilities is the most efficient and effective means of promoting interdepartmental communication of good practice.

44   The audit team learnt that College academic deans and the Chair of the School Board are prescribed a key role in this devolved system. As members of QEC and of Council they are expected to link institutional and local quality assurance processes and policies. Evidence seen by the team confirmed the formal responsibility of academic deans for quality assurance. Evidence heard during the audit highlighted, however, the key role played by heads of department in managing quality and standards in the College's devolved structure. This responsibility was not apparent from the formal role description. The College is encouraged, therefore, to review the head of department job description to ensure that this key function is clearly stated and understood. The audit team also heard about regular meetings (two to three times each term)

between the heads of department with the sector vice-principals to discuss policy matters. These were considered by heads of department as an important feature of the processes for managing quality, and particularly enhancement.

45   The SED stated that responsibility for academic policy relating to examinations is vested in the EAC which is chaired by the Vice-Principal (Academic Policy) and reports to QEC. EAC membership includes the chairs of degree examination boards (CDEBs), special examination boards (LLB, Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS), Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS)), the three postgraduate examination boards, and the Academic Registrar. The audit team noted that among other matters EAC had considered policy matters such as guidelines for examination boards, degree classification (including those for joint honours), condonation and examination offences. EAC has also received reports from the various examination boards. At the time of the audit, as a response to issues raised in external examiners' reports in 2002, the College was introducing a new system of classification for honours including joint degrees, for students admitted from September 2004. Following discussion at EAC, the AB has decided to reduce the number of different methods of bachelor degree classification (previously in excess of 20) to two: one for disciplines reporting to the Arts DEB and the Engineering DEB except for BA Geography and programmes in electronic engineering, and another method for disciplines reporting to the Science DEB, including BA Geography and programmes in electronic engineering. The new classificatory system marks a significant departure from previous practice, especially in relation to joint awards where responsibility for classification will rest with one of the two subject examination boards (with representation from the other) rotating normally on a triennial cycle. However, the team noted that the procedures have not been consistently applied across the College, and thus it is encouraged to keep under review these new methods and systems for classifying honours (see paragraph 160). The QA Handbook includes clear guidance on policies relating to moderation of examination question papers and scripts and other forms of assessed work, the duties of examination boards, criteria for the appointment of external examiners and their duties. Examination boards are responsible for all matters relating to student assessment including setting and approving question papers, marking, determining the performance of candidates, deciding matters of progression and classification of finalists for honours.

46   The audit team considered that the framework for managing quality was generally fit for purpose. Through its reading of committee minutes the team found considerable evidence that the framework operated effectively. However, the team considered that the committee structures below the level of faculty or school was somewhat complex and confusing and might inhibit the dissemination of good practice. Moreover, the team advise the College to keep under review the operation of the system for classifying honours degrees.

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

47   The SED stated that the College believes it has made real progress in strengthening its quality assurance processes and improving the quality of education for students since 2001, but that it is not complacent about future challenges to be met. The SED identified a range of plans for further enhancement of the quality of provision and student learning opportunities.

48   The College is aware of the need to continue to refine and enhance its committee structure, their roles and function in relation to the new challenges ahead. In this regard the College was, at the time of the audit, reviewing the effectiveness of the Council and its committees, and recently reviewed the level of scrutiny of ARs. At the time of the audit visit, it had already implemented the rescheduling of QEC summer meetings, signalled in the SED, to improve the consideration given to programme approvals at that time of the academic year, and to reinforce that late submission of proposals would not be accepted. As part of these plans the audit team consider it desirable for the College to consider the lack of a standardised nomenclature for faculty and department quality structures, for the effective dissemination of good practice across the institution (see paragraph 43).

49   The College has determined that enhancing some specific aspects of student feedback processes are necessary. It intends to roll out the successful pilot scheme for increasing the involvement of students in SSLCs across the College, except SMD, which has a successful system in place. The College is working proactively to develop on-line student feedback systems. The College is also considering the introduction of a peer support system in which year two students support year one students as part of the College retention strategy. As part of this process, but also with other benefits for staff and students, the College plans to introduce a new Student Information System and integrate virtual learning environments with it within the medium term. The

College is encouraged to move forward with all of these enhancements as soon as is practicable.

50   The College is also planning further developments for academic staff especially in relation to learning and teaching. It has recognised that the Certificate in Learning and Teaching (CILT) programme can be a significant vehicle for teaching quality enhancement and that present restrictions on the number of staff able to access the programme reduce its potential impact across the College. It plans to increase the throughput of staff on the programme (see paragraph 108). The College is also intending to develop transparent criteria for academic staff promotion that recognise teaching excellence. It has already moved to enhance the focus of staff on teaching and learning by publication of the Teaching and Learning Strategy 2002 to 2005 as a booklet sent to every academic member of staff, and by the twice yearly publication of the *Teaching and Learning Bulletin*.

51   The College acknowledged in the SED that it needed to further develop its approach to level descriptors. It has already introduced generic level descriptors (based on those developed by the Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC)) as guidance to programme teams designing new programmes (see paragraphs 81 and 82). The College is advised to further develop its plans for level descriptors and ensure that it is applied across all subjects and programmes. Overall, the audit team considered that the College's plans for enhancement of its quality assurance framework were appropriate.

Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

52   The approval of standard new programmes and course units, amendments to existing programmes and previously approved course units, and withdrawal of programmes and course units is devolved to faculty or, in the case of SMD, the Education Board. Approval of new programmes is a two-stage process. Part 1 is a planning stage with Part 2 being presentation and consideration of detailed academic content. Following approval by the departmental staff meeting or a departmental teaching committee and being signed-off by the departmental head, the programme proposal is sent to the QA Unit which facilitates its consideration at the appropriate faculty or school board. These arrangements also apply to distance-learning units. Programmes involving more than one faculty or school must be approved by both boards. QEC periodically receives through the QA Unit a summary

list of all proposals approved at faculty and school level. Proposals for non-standard programmes, such as Foundation Degrees, programmes or involving collaboration with other institutions follow the same process, but must also be approved by QEC.

53   Part 2 of the standard programme approval process involves approval by the relevant faculty or school board of a detailed programme description covering aims and learning outcomes, programme structure including all pathways and course units available, proposal forms for each new course unit, list of academic staff involved in delivery, including any staff from collaborating institutions, a programme specification, and evidence of support from at least one external adviser. QEC receives a regular report prepared by the QA Unit of all standard programmes approved at faculty or school boards. Any non-standard programmes also require the approval of QEC.

54   Programme specifications, which are intended 'to show students what they are expected to achieve', must be attached to Part 2 proposal forms, and should engage with subject benchmark statements and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (*FHEQ) as reference points. There is a matrix of generic level descriptors, devised by the SEEC, included for guidance to those writing the programme specification for Part 2 approval. The Part 2 proposal documentation does not signal a requirement for proposing teams to cross-refer various sections of the template: explicit reference is expected only in the programme specification. However, evidence seen by the audit team revealed that some proposers did take the opportunity in the Part 2 proposal document to include, for example, direct reference to the FHEQ or relevant subject benchmark statements in their submission in addition to what is in the programme specification. The team considered that this did enhance the proposal documentation and encourages the College in this enhancement.

55   The SED identified a number of recent occurrences where departments keen to capture niche markets had attempted to compress the approval process. Consequently, QEC reminded departments and faculty and school boards early in 2004 of the importance of full consideration of all proposals at departmental and faculty level, and adjusted its schedule of meetings to link better with the meetings of faculty and school boards. The SED also noted that faculty and school boards sometimes have given less than rigorous scrutiny to new programme proposals which are mainly the repackaging of existing course units. Consequently, in September 2004 the QA Unit

issued guidelines to faculty and school boards regarding full consideration of new programme proposals, drawing attention in particular to the requirement for full documentation and the need for consultation with students before any substantial amendment of a programme can be approved.

56   In order to enable the audit team to review the operation of the programme approval process the College supplied the team with three audit trails for recently approved programmes. It was clear to the team that the process operated as described in the QA Handbook, and that programme specifications were routinely included in Part 2 documentation, as were written comments by external advisers. Alignment with subject benchmark statements was either referred to explicitly or embedded in the programme specification.

57   Notwithstanding the limitations noted in the SED, the audit team concluded that the arrangements for programme approval were fit for purpose and was satisfied that the process, especially following recent adjustments noted above, was effective.

58   Annual monitoring of programmes, including joint honours and collaborative programmes, is undertaken through the AR process. Each department is required to produce an AR which covers all taught and postgraduate programmes. QEC has produced an AR template. This includes sections on planning for teaching; teaching and learning; student recruitment, progression and award; learning resources; external examiner reports; student participation; and a summary overview of good practice. The template requests action plans relating specifically to teaching and learning, student progression and learning resources. It is expected that ARs are informed by centrally produced statistical data, external examiner reports, staff feedback, student feedback, appropriate internal review reports, appropriate subject review reports and any recent PRSB reports. ARs are considered by the relevant faculty or school board, which in turn send a summary of all reports considered to QEC. Any ARs which include any collaborative programmes are also considered by QEC.

59   The SED stated that ARs 'provide a vital self-evaluation of departmental performances, monitoring progress and problems, and informing both College management and quality control bodies on a more regular basis than a sexennial review', and as such the AR process is a key component of the College's quality assurance framework. According to the QA Handbook, the process is not only a means to promote ownership of quality assurance and enhancement at subject and department level but also enables the College to assure itself that programmes are achieving their aims.

60   The QA Handbook places responsibility for completion of ARs with the head of department or equivalent. The report should then be considered by the relevant departmental committee and by the SSLC before being sent to the QA Unit, who facilitate its progress to faculty and school boards. The audit team read a number of recent ARs, including those for the DATs, and were satisfied that actions emanating from student evaluation questionnaires were regularly included in ARs. There was less evidence of SSLC consideration of ARs. The SED noted that the timing of the AR process within the academic calendar had caused difficulties with involving students in the preparation of ARs prior to consideration by faculty and school boards. The College is actively considering how it might resolve this matter.

61   In addition, where relevant QEC receive ARs from University of London subject boards. These are intended to provide a compilation of inputs to University Senate and the colleges of reviews of teaching and external examiners' reports.

62   In its reading of selected ARs the audit team noted that issues to be addressed are not routinely drawn together in a detailed action plan with an allocation of actions to named individuals and deadlines for completion. The team noted that the summary of ARs at faculty level presented to QEC includes matters for action, and that this could, if effectively operated, replace the need for detailed action plans in the ARs. However, the team considered that currently these summaries are not presented as formal action plans. The team concluded that it would be advisable for the College to consider how, in the interests of enhancing its ability to gain an oversight of issues raised by students, staff and other stakeholders and recorded in ARs, it can best ensure that identified actions in ARs are implemented.

63   The College has also considered whether delegation of responsibility from QEC to faculty and school boards for considering ARs is appropriate, and whether such a detailed AR each year is justified. Following some debate, QEC reaffirmed in 2004 that ARs are an invaluable part of the College's framework for managing quality and resolved to ensure that the need for such detailed reports was fully understood at departmental level. Given that the AR is such a key component of the College's quality infrastructure the audit team welcomed the College's decision on this matter.

64   The audit team concluded that the AR process generally operates effectively. Although the team noted that the process for producing the AR is not always the same within faculties, it was reassured by the equivalence of overall outcomes, and the College's willingness to regularly review the design and workings of what is a key component of the College's quality assurance framework.

65   The College does not have a formal system of periodic review of programmes. It generally relies on its process of annual reporting, coupled with external examiner reports, feedback from students through the SSLCs, student questionnaires and, in some areas, periodic accreditation by PRSBs to achieve the same result. In addition, the College has recently introduced an enhanced system of periodic internal review (IR) of departments and disciplines. According to the QA Handbook this is 'an evaluation of a department's systems and procedures for managing, maintaining and enhancing academic quality and standards of teaching and learning', and includes all undergraduate and postgraduate provision within a department, and joint honours programmes. The internal review cycle is normally six years but may be earlier if considered necessary or appropriate. Procedures for the periodic review of collaborative provision must be agreed by QEC as part of its approval of any collaborative arrangement (see paragraphs 144 to 149).

66   The internal review process involves review by a panel, chaired by a member of QEC and comprising two reviewers external to the College, Director of ESD or nominee, an academic staff member from the department being reviewed and one from another department, an academic dean, a member of the QA Unit and the SU Vice-President (Education and Representation) or nominee. Inclusion of the latter member was considered by the audit team as a feature of good practice. The panel reviews the departmental or subject area's self-evaluation and a range of supporting documentation, and meets with both staff and students in the department. The confirmed report is considered by the relevant faculty level board and QEC. The department is required to submit to the relevant faculty level board an interim response and action plan within three months, and one year later another report presenting the outcomes of the action plan implementation.

67   As part of the DATs the audit team read a number of internal review reports and the follow-up reports. Further, the team saw evidence of detailed and extensive formal departmental engagement with the outcomes of the review process and a secure level of institutional oversight of processes for

taking forward agreed actions. On the basis of the evidence available the audit team concluded that the internal review system is a robust and rigorous process, which reflects precepts of the *Code of practice*, and concurred with the College's view that the process is effective in assessing the range and strength of academic provision.

68   Overall, the audit team considered the College's arrangements for programme approval, annual monitoring and periodic review to be effective, that the reporting mechanisms ensured College oversight, and action plans were followed through. The team recognised the key role ascribed to ARs in this process, and would encourage the College to consider the wider implications of any reconsideration of the role of ARs. The team also regarded as good practice the inclusion of a member of the SU executive on all internal review panels.

External participation in internal review processes

69   Part 2 of the programme approval process requires a written commentary and/or expression of support from an expert external to the College in the area covered by the programme proposal. It is normal for the external adviser to be a senior academic within the discipline and/or with experience of teaching on a similar programme elsewhere. Departments are also encouraged, where appropriate, to seek comments from a major employer or professional body.

70   In its reading of faculty and school board and QEC minutes the audit team saw evidence of the weight given by the College to the external adviser's comments on programme approval. Faculty level boards and QEC have recently withheld formal approval of programme proposals which were not accompanied by an external adviser's commentary. Moreover, the guidelines issued by the QA Unit to faculty and school boards in September 2004 restated the requirements for programme approval to include a commentary from an external adviser.

71   Internal review panels include two external assessors. They are expected to have knowledge of the discipline area and preferably experience of internal review in their own institution or of external review by QAA or PRSBs. As well as serving on the review panel, they are invited to comment on the draft internal review report and the departmental response to it. Internal review reports and departmental responses seen by the audit team demonstrated proactive engagement at all levels of the College with the views of external assessors.

72   On the evidence available to it, the audit team concurred with the College's view that the external assessors play a crucial role in providing impartial academic judgement on internal review panels, and are a key element in the wider internal review processes.

External examiners and their reports

73   External examiners are appointed to every award bearing taught programme, both undergraduate and postgraduate, within the College. In addition to 'standard' externals, the College makes significant use of intercollegiate examiners at undergraduate level for University of London degrees. These are external examiners drawn from other colleges of the University of London, usually one for each discipline; and they have the additional responsibility of ensuring that the degree being awarded is comparable to that of other colleges within the University of London. Examination boards responsible for programmes that involve the award of a degree must include at least one external examiner from outside of the University of London.

74   The QA Handbook contains a code of practice for external examiners and a statement of procedures for external examiners' reports, which together define the appointments procedures, the roles, and the process for dealing with external examiners' reports. The audit team noted that QEC had recently reviewed College practices against the revised version of the *Code of practice, Section 4: External Examining* and concluded that they are consistent with the new version of the *Code*.

75   While there is no formal training process, new external examiners are expected to be carefully briefed by the chair of the examination board as soon as possible after his/her appointment has been confirmed. College guidelines detail the procedures that the briefing should follow.

76   All external examiners are required to provide an oral and a written report. Written reports are required to follow a College template which poses a series of questions on assessment and procedural issues and, in particular, enquires whether the standard of the award is comparable with the expectations of similar awards in the subject elsewhere. Reports are read by the Vice-Principal (Academic Policy) and the Academic Registrar who together highlight issues that require a response, and discuss this with the chair of the relevant exam board. The QA Handbook stated that the College regards this practice as an essential part of its quality assurance framework and that the external examiners reports form a major source of information for the AR

process. Chairs of examination boards are required to write directly to the external examiner within one month of the board meeting, with a copy to the QA Unit, addressing key points.

77   A summary of all external examiners comments is produced by the QA Unit, and circulated to faculty and school boards. The summary is then amended, as appropriate, and sent to QEC for comment. The summary is then updated and forwarded to the University (Senate House) the following September.

78   The external examining process for collaborative provision is essentially identical to that of campus based provision. The recent double degree awards with China, for example, will involve two external examiners, one nominated by each institution, but satisfying the criteria for external examiner appointments at both institutions and consequently will be appointed to both institutions. Reports will be fed through to the relevant department which will then respond to the external examiner and feed through to the faculty level board. Examination boards also follow the same procedure as the home based courses. All examination boards are held at the College, and in the case of the China awards, for example, will also involve a video link to a simultaneous meeting in China.

79   The College considers that external examiners play a vital role in the maintenance of academic standards and in ensuring rigorous but fair assessment procedures and is confident that the process is working well.

80   The audit team read a number of external examiners reports from 2001 to 2004, including all reports for the programmes covered by each of the DATs which varied somewhat in their level of detail. The team was able to trace the progress of some of these reports through the College's senior committees. The team concluded that the arrangements for the appointment of external examiners, the content of the reports and the procedures to make use of the reports are effective and often reflect good practice elsewhere in the sector.

External reference points

81   The SED stated that the College uses the Academic Infrastructure 'to inform its internal quality procedures'. The SED also stated that the College adopted qualification level descriptors as part of the review of the Course Unit Scheme in 1996. At the time these were mainly related to the year of study rather than an assessment of learning outcomes. Following publication of the FHEQ in January 2001

and the recent College change in the method of classification in undergraduate honours degrees, the College has begun to redesign courses so as to relate levels to leaning outcomes, based on generic learning outcomes developed by the SEEC. The audit team noted that a number of departments had already related course levels to learning outcomes, for example, English and Drama. The SED stated that QEC intends to move the College towards this concordance during 2004-05, a view that was restated during the audit visit. The team advise the College to ensure that its intentions of relating qualification level descriptors to learning outcomes is completed in accordance with this timetable.

82   The SED stated that after making the above changes the College believes that it will be following 'the FHEQ with one exception; postgraduate conversion programmes are called master's degrees (in line with accepted convention) even though little of the material is likely to be at level M'. The audit team concluded that this is not in line with good practice elsewhere in the sector or the FHEQ, and advise the College to review this matter with a degree of urgency.

83   The extent to which programmes engage with subject benchmark statements and relevant PRSB requirements is addressed at the programme approval stage and at subsequent internal reviews. For example, the Notes for Guidance on the Development and Approval of a New Programme of Study, published by the QA Unit, makes it clear that programme initiators, in particular, should address the relationship to subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ. Many of the College's programmes are also subject to stringent accreditation processes by PRSBs, such as the General Medical Council, General Dental Council, Engineering Council, British Computer Society, and engagement with PRSB requirements and benchmarks is part of the validation process. Subsequently, the QA Unit, in overseeing the programme development process, also has a responsibility to ensure that new programmes are in line with national and PRSB expectations.

84   QEC has agreed that programme specifications should be written for students while allowing teaching teams to reflect on the aims and learning outcomes of their programmes. Guidance notes for the development of programme specifications have been produced by the QA Unit which make it clear that from 2001-02, any new programme of study is required to lodge a programme specification as part of the College's programme approval process, and that programme specifications will also be considered during any internal or external review of

a department or subject area. These guidance notes include a recommended template designed for use by all departments and subject areas and include a recommendation that the template 'should be used flexibly allowing programme specifications to be presented in an open narrative style or as a series of bullet points or using a mixture of the two'. It is expected however that each programme specification must address all of the headings given in the template and should mirror the information already requested by the College's programme approval process. Evidence seen by the team suggests that the College may well wish to reflect on whether the flexibility of the Part 2 proposal, in allowing various formats, might lead to some of these headings not being addressed.

85   The audit team saw much evidence that the College has extensively considered the various sections of the *Code of practice*. For example, senior College committees had considered the *Code* and, where necessary, modified College practices accordingly. Recent papers to QEC included the revised versions of the *Code of Practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning),* and *Section 4: External examining* together with a paper mapping the precepts of the revised section of the *Code* against current College practices with suggestions as to how current practices could be improved. The team was also able to track how the original *Collaborative provision and flexible distance learning* section had informed the initial design of the College's ODL programmes, and the *Postgraduate research programmes* section had informed the establishment of Graduate Schools within the College.

86   On balance, the audit team concluded that with the exception of some aspects of the FHEQ and programme specifications, the College had effectively engaged with the development of the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points.

Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies

87   In the period since the College's *Quality Audit Report* (2001) the College has undergone subject reviews in politics (January 2001) and in economics (October 2001), and developmental engagements in history (May 2003) and chemistry (June 2004). The College has also had accreditation visits and reports from the following PRSBs: Institution of Mechanical Engineers, The Royal Aeronautical Society, Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining, Institution of Electrical Engineers, the Royal Society of Chemistry, and the ILTHE (now part of HEA). All finalised reports

from external bodies, and the departments' responses to them, are considered at the relevant faculty or school board, and then go to QEC for consideration. The SED did not comment on the effectiveness of this procedure.

88 There were no common themes that appeared in the four QAA reports. Positive features included a clear and well developed strategy for teaching and learning which is linked to the learning objectives, the quality and promptness of feedback, approachability of staff, effective use of the federal University of London's learning resources, effective use of peer review processes and the curriculum being informed by staff scholarship and research activities. Areas for further consideration included student representation on the departmental committees, the development of students' presentational skills, assessment practices in relation to more explicit articulation and use of criteria, and assessment of all transferable skills.

89 The audit team read a number of reports from external bodies, and the departmental responses to the reports. The team considered that the responses were timely and appropriate in scope and detail. The team also tracked consideration of selected PRSB reports through relevant faculty level committees and QEC. It was clear to the team that the various committees gave careful consideration to the reports, and that QEC takes action on recommendations which have institution-wide implications. An example of this was the College's response to a recommendation in the developmental engagement report for chemistry regarding provision to students of generic degree classification descriptors. In considering the report, QEC agreed that it should consider such descriptors 'on a College-wide basis' and received an example of a set of such descriptors from another institution to inform its discussion. This had still to be progressed further at the time of the audit visit. The team noted that there was no formal process by which the rest of the College could gain an overview of the good practice and recommendations contained in external reports. Although this happens informally through publication of QEC minutes and members relaying matters back to colleagues, the team considered that the College might like to consider ways of ensuring that this opportunity for enhancement is shared more widely.

90 The audit team concluded that the College's arrangements for responding to reports from external bodies is fit for purpose. From its reading of a number of reports the team considered that departmental responses were timely and often extensive. The team was also of the view that procedures for consideration

by faculty level committees and QEC are generally effective, although encourage the College to reflect on how it disseminates the findings of the reports across the College.

Student representation at operational and institutional level

91 According to the SED at the college level, students have representation 'on all College bodies, other than those dealing with staffing or examination matters', and this 'is highly valued' by the College. Student representatives sit on the following College level committees: Council, AB, QEC, the Graduate School Management Board, the Finance and Planning Committee, the Equal Opportunities Committee, the Information Services Board (ISB), the Widening Access Steering Committee and SSB. The last of these boards contains six student representatives and, importantly, sees reports from all the relevant central services and has played an active role in a number of areas including the structure of the teaching year and development of the Student Village.

92 The SWS outlined general satisfaction with the number of College committees and boards with student representation on them, and that 'student representatives generally felt that their comments are listened to and acted upon'. From the committee minutes read by the audit team it was apparent that it was usually executive officers of the SU that attended. On some committees, such as Finance and Planning, there is a single student representative, a member of the SU Executive, but on other committees there are several student representatives, all of whom are drawn from SSLCs. This arrangement is intended to ensure that representatives have adequate experience and knowledge of matters discussed, and so that they can report up and down the system. However, in recognition of declining attendance by student representatives the QA Unit working with the SU has worked to further encourage members of SSLCs to attend senior committees. The QA Unit has produced a useful guide to encourage student involvement: How to make yourself heard. While the SWS emphasises success in getting students to attend faculty level meetings, at a more general level the SED stated that 'there is still more to be done on this matter'.

93 At departmental level there exists at least one SSLC, and often more for larger departments, which the QA handbook describes as advisory bodies to either the head of department or, in the case of the MBBS, the Dean for Medical Education and, in the case of the BDS, to the Dean for Dentistry. The SED described them as a forum for discussion of issues relating to the teaching programme or student-related

facilities, and stated that they 'provide active forums for dealing rapidly with student concerns and enable students to be consulted about future developments'. At faculty level student representatives sit on faculty and school boards, usually two from each department.

94   Arrangements for student involvement in faculty level and department level committees have undergone considerable development in recent years. The QA Unit and the SU have worked together to address the declining levels of attendance of students at all levels. Central to this was the Course Representative Project which was piloted in 2002-03 in the non-medical faculties. The SU played a major role in running elections, training and supporting new SSLC student representatives while the QA Unit established a centralised record of all SSLCs, and maintained contact with the faculty board chairs on feedback and agenda items. The SWS remarked on the initial success of the pilot in both securing the filling of vacancies, attendance at meetings and making positive contributions to discussions, and looked forward to the system being rolled out across all departments in the College, except the Department of Geography and the SMD, where it was thought that satisfactory systems were already in place.

95   Minutes arising from SSLCs are made available to students, either on a website or on departmental notice-boards, and copied to the QA Unit. The latter extract significant issues for periodic report to faculty boards. In addition, since the Course Representative pilot, faculty boards receive an oral report from SSLC representatives. In SMD there exists a Student Affairs Board which is intended to discuss a wide range of issues concerning the School and its facilities. The SED stated that it 'is an extremely useful forum for debating pastoral issues'. Students met by the audit team were particularly positive about the arrangements in SMD.

96   The audit team learnt that in SMD student representatives co-chaired SSLCs. SU representatives met by the team spoke positively of this development. The team considered that this practice might be worthy of wider dissemination across the College.

97   Overall, the audit team considered that the College's arrangements for student representation were effective in most areas and that, in general, the relevant committees contained sufficient representation. The team noted a number of examples which demonstrated that student views were taken seriously and had influenced College policy. While the team noted some variation in the commitment of some departments to the SSLC system, they were encouraged by the joint work of the SU and the QA Unit on the Course Representative project.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

98   Feedback from students is gathered in a number of ways including through SSLCs, focus groups and questionnaires. The latter at the level of the course is the main mechanism for attaining student feedback. The QA Handbook contains a detailed Code of Practice on this matter, and allocates responsibility for ensuring that the process is completed to the Head of Department, or Dean for Medical Education and, in the case of the BDS, to the Dean for Dentistry. Questionnaires should normally be completed at the end of each course, but the Code of Practice notes that mid-course and whole programme questionnaires may be useful. While the Code of Practice sets out some areas for generic consideration, it leaves scope for local adaptation. It is a requirement that summaries and departmental responses are conveyed to students using notice-boards, through SSLCs and the relevant departmental committee. They should also be reported on in ARs and internal review reports. The SED stated that in response to low return rates the College is piloting the use of internet-based questionnaires and feedback mechanisms. Initial evaluation reported to QEC suggests that the pilots were successful, and the audit team learnt that the College intended to use internet-based questionnaires more widely. While students reported that they were encouraged by the College's decision to introduce internet-based course and service questionnaires, they informed the team that the operation of course questionnaires was patchy across the two non-medical faculties.

99   College-level services also use questionnaires and focus groups to gather feedback from students. Outputs are considered by the ISB which in turn reports to AB. The audit team read reports to ISB from the IT Users Forum and the Library Users Forum which reflected careful consideration of students views on a range of relevant matters.

100 There are currently no formal arrangements for the gathering of feedback from students who have graduated from the College. In recent years the College has relied on informal feedback from their alumni. However, the College is actively considering how it will engage with government requirements that it gather and publish the outputs of the national graduate survey.

101 In several departments there are fairly strong links, both formal and informal, with employers who advise on programme development. For example, the Department of Computer Science has an Industrial Panel made up of advisers from a wide

range of organisations including national and multinational companies. The Department of Materials has a similar panel which meets twice yearly and advises on content of individual modules as well as programmes. Less formal links include those that exist between departments and employers offering placements while other departments such as Economics and Mathematical Sciences maintain links through staff who also work with companies, sometimes major institutions in the City of London. The nature of its work means that SMD has very close links with the NHS, and thus there is a constant cycle of employer feedback.

102 Overall, the audit team considered that the arrangements for gathering feedback from students, graduates and employers were somewhat segmented, and there was as yet no discernible formal overarching framework. The team encourages the College to review its approach to this matter. The team welcomed the College's efforts to increase course questionnaire returns by introducing internet-based questionnaires.

Progression and completion statistics

103 The SED did not contain an overall evaluation of the College's use of progression and completion statistics in the delivery and management of standards and quality. However, it did note that the current management information system was nearing the end of its operational life as it could not cope with the new types of programme being developed such as distance learning, programmes based on academic levels rather than years, and those with more flexible methods of delivery.

104 The audit team was able to consider in some detail the range of statistics used by the College. At the macro-management level, for example, the Registry is responsible for submitting statutory returns on student data to HEFCE and the Higher Education Statistics Agency, and for providing student statistics for College management and quality assurance purposes, which it partly does through a Registry Digest of Statistics. The Digest is freely available to staff by means of the College intranet. The Digest includes a useful range of summary statistics by department, including enrolments, gender, ethnicity, withdrawals and progression, by year for the past six years. The team noted that these summaries were being applied to inform the deliberations of the College.

105 At the micro-management level the preparation of a department's AR includes a statistical summary of the department's performance that is likely to include

the number of applications, offers and enrolments; the average qualifications on entry; progression statistics and number and class of graduates. Such quantitative statistics also feature in the Guidelines for producing self-evaluation documents for internal review, produced by the QA Unit. However, the audit team formed the view that from the evidence seen, more use could have been made of these statistics when analysing the previous years' activities. Moreover, the team learnt in discussions with academic staff that academic departments often used summary statistics from their own databases. Departmental staff recognised that these were sometimes at variance with the data provided centrally, forcing them at times to reconcile the two sets of statistics. The resulting statistics, however, were not always entirely accurate as some of the progression data provided to the team demonstrated.

106 The audit team concluded that the College is doing its best to work with the database systems that it has at present and recognises that a lot of useful work is being done at the moment to plan a replacement system that meets the needs of the College. However, the team encourages the College to ensure that it and other stakeholders have confidence in the existing statistical information which it produces.

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

107 The main stated aim of the College's Human Resources (HR) Strategy is to fulfil the part of the mission statement concerned with achieving and sustaining 'a reputation for teaching excellence and innovation'. For this the HR Strategy stated that the College needs 'highly professional, trained, dedicated and innovative staff', and that the aim was to develop a culture among staff that is 'enthusiastic about continually developing'.

108 In the appointment process applicants for academic posts are required to give a short presentation to the selection panel. New staff with less than three years higher education teaching experience are required to register for the PGCAP. Younger members of staff met by the audit team were positive about the value of PGCAP, and commented favourably on the benefits of having a mentor. Part-time staff or experienced staff can enrol in the less intensive CILT. Although the SED noted the value of running the CILT, only five staff had so far graduated, partly because of the limited capacity of the course. It was stated that this was a current bottleneck, and there are plans to raise the throughput to more than 24 per session. The

College is also introducing a Personal Development Planning framework for young research staff.

109 The Queen Mary Performance Appraisal Scheme (QMPAS) which was established in 2002, requires staff to set measurable performance targets that align to departmental objectives. The SED stated that the scheme is still under development, and the role being taken by SMD in setting standards for teaching activity is leading the way on this matter. In DAT meetings the audit team noted the high percentage of staff met that had been through appraisal, and the positive view of QMPAS imparted by staff. Part-time staff are also subject to appraisal.

110 The College accepts the importance of reflecting teaching achievements in promotion criteria, and is presently at work on developing transparent criteria, so that contributions to teaching can be recognised more systematically and objectively alongside research performance. The HR Strategy includes an action plan for reward, embracing the concept of 'non pay reward', alongside financial benefits for high performance.

111 The audit team noted that the College is actively engaged in improving and strengthening procedures for the recruitment and retention of staff through observation of teaching, staff surveys and developing the concept of reward. Although there is an admission by the College that within individual departments observation of teaching can become moribund, needing to be restarted by external stimulus, there is evidence that such stimulus leads to high proportions of staff in practice being observed.

Assurance of the quality of teaching through staff support and development

112 One of the College's strategic aims is to 'to promote educational and staff development that not only equips staff to meet their current needs but also prepares them for future changes'. The SED described the assurance of the quality of teaching as 'a multi-faceted, never-ending exercise' involving a wide range of activities including the PGCAP and CILT, projects related to the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund, peer observation, encouraging use of the Learning Teaching Support network (LTSN) (now part of HEA) membership, schemes to recognise teaching excellence and reward innovation, and dissemination of good practice through the in-house Teaching and Learning Bulletin. TLQEG is responsible for coordinating and staff development initiatives.

113 Departments are required to develop their own teaching and learning strategy which are lodged with the QA Unit. TLQEG is responsible for monitoring the

local strategies and for ensuring that they are in line with the College's Teaching and Learning Strategy. They are also considered as part of internal review.

114 In 2001 the ESD unit was established. Its main role is to bring together staff development and a new importance to educational development. In addition, ESD has produced a number of briefing papers to assist staff in such matters as personal tutoring, PhD supervision and how students learn. In general, the team concluded that the work of the ESD in supporting staff development was good practice. However, the SED stated that there was still some way to go with regard to involving all staff in such staff development initiatives. The team also learnt that many departments also have their own staff development officer. However, these post holders do not always have any links with the ESD.

115 The College has two schemes sponsored by the Drapers' Company which are designed to recognise teaching excellence and to reward innovation and teaching developments. All staff who teach students or facilitate their learning are eligible for the Drapers' Awards for Excellence in Teaching. The audit team considered it an example of good practice that nominations for these awards are most commonly made by students, usually through SSLCs. The Drapers' Prizes for the Development of Learning and Teaching are intended to reward innovation and teaching developments.

116 The SED stated that the College 'fully recognises the importance of peer observation of teaching as a key element in quality enhancement'. There is a detailed and helpful Observation of Teaching Handbook produced by the ESD, and it is College policy that all departments should undertake peer observation, and that it should be reviewed as part of the IR. As part of their probation academic staff are required to undergo a number of peer observation engagements, and observation is a mandatory part of the PGCAP. Part-time staff are also required to undergo peer observation. The SED noted that some departments are more enthusiastic than others in undertaking peer observation, and in some departments the process lies largely dormant until stimulated by an impending internal review.

117 Membership of the ILTHE/HEA varies across departments, with significant percentages of staff in Geography, English and Drama and the Education Directorate of the SMD having joined. The SED stated that the College 'is not certain of the extent to which membership of the ILTHE…contributes to quality enhancement', but considers that membership of the LTSN is much more beneficial to quality enhancement, and noted how several departments

had received funding from the subject specialist centres. The College also encourages staff to enhance the currency of their teaching subject knowledge through encouraging research, publishing research and attending research conferences.

118 The audit team concluded that there exist some examples of good practice by the College in supporting staff development including the Drapers' Company sponsored awards and prizes, and that the establishment of the ESD had provided a helpful impetus towards the embedding of staff development initiatives.

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

119 The SED stated that distance learning is one type of e-learning and although there were currently only a small number of programmes delivered by distance learning, it was expected that within two years 15 to 20 per cent of the total student population would be receiving teaching partly delivered by distance learning. The majority of the existing distance-learning programmes are coordinated by the ODL Unit located in the Department of Computer Science. There are some 200 BSc Computer Science ODL students in Hong Kong who are taught in collaboration with an institutional partner (Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education) and attend classroom tuition and supervised laboratory sessions at the Institute under the control of the Department of Computer Science teaching staff. MSc degrees are also offered through Portugal Telecom and in Macao with Macao Polytechnic Institute. At the time of the audit visit, examples of distance-learning programmes not managed by ODL included the Postgraduate Diploma in International Commercial Arbitration (in the Centre for Commercial Law Studies) and the MScs in Internet Computing, e-Commerce Engineering, and Telecommunications, in the Department of Electronic Engineering.

120 The arrangements of approval for programmes involving distance learning must be considered not only by the appropriate faculty or school board but also by QEC. Monitoring and review arrangements are the same as for standard programmes.

121 The SED made it clear that existing programmes delivered by distance learning were initiated by academics and that so far there has been limited engagement by the College's central services. The College is aware of the present and future demands that provision of study opportunities by distance learning bring, especially in relation to student support and library services. One of the responses to this has

been the production of the guidelines 'Ensuring Quality in Electronic Engineering Distance Learning' by the Department of Electronic Engineering for ensuring quality in distance-learning within the Department. This is a user-friendly guide to issues in the quality assurance of distance-learning provision in the Department which acknowledges the challenges as well as providing exemplars of ways to address them. It has been recommended for dissemination across the College and the audit team endorse the quality of this guide. QEC has determined that this guide should be freely available on the College's intranet.

122 The College has recognised the importance of providing appropriate staff development and support in relation to distributed learning through both formal staff development opportunities and the dissemination of information more widely across the institution. ESD organises a range of workshops on aspects of distributed and distance learning, including an introduction to e-learning and a regular e-learning seminar series. The second issue of the College Learning and Teaching Bulletin contained a special 'Focus on e-learning' including very helpful definitions and explanations of key terminology and technology, and examples of how blended learning can be, and has been, applied in various curriculum areas in the College.

123 Distance-learning programmes have to date been a small part of the College's provision. The College is planning that distance learning undergoes considerable expansion in the next few years with up to 20 per cent of students experiencing distance learning through this mechanism. The audit team concluded that the College, through the work of ESD, had already undertaken much good work in preparing staff to exploit the teaching through distance learning, and that the continued development of their virtual learning environment (VLE) platform may facilitate this.

Learning support resources

124 At the college level library and information technology (IT) services are overseen by Information Services (IS). IS is overseen by the ISB which includes two student members and reports to both AB and the Finance and Planning Committee. The IT Users Forum and the Library Users Forum both report to ISB. In recent years the College has undertaken significant developments in its estates, including a new Learning Resources Centre and new halls of residence for over 1,000 students as the centrepiece of the new Student Village. At the level of programme development, in line with the College's strategic aim to devolve issues related to academic planning to departments it is the head of

department's responsibility for initiating requests for resources when proposing new programmes.

125 The SED contained little evaluation of the College's provision of learning support resources or their management. The Strategic Plan 2001 to 2006 included a number of priorities in the information field, emphasising the College's commitment to providing sufficient resources for students and staff needs, and committing to greater use of electronic information.

126 One part of the shift to greater reliance on electronic information is the considerable investment in electronic books and journals and the development of an on-line library catalogue. The Strategic Plan also listed as a priority staff and student access to secure IT facilities so that they can work from College residential accommodation and at a distance from the College 'but with access to the same facilities, within feasible limits, as if they are on campus'. The audit team noted a number of positive developments in this area including rooms in the new Student Village being networked and the possibility of students being able to connect their laptops to the College network through a wireless network. However, students met by the team outlined a number of problems associated with accessing the College's intranet, especially when studying away from the campus. The team noted that departmental websites were often not linked to the College intranet, and varied in the quality and quantity of information that was available on them. The team concluded that it would be desirable for the College to review the different arrangements for student access to the College's intranet.

127 At the time of the audit visit a number of different VLEs were being used by different departments. Following trials in 2002-03, the College has adopted a commercially available VLE and will gradually move to a single system. It is intended that the VLE will open up possibilities for complementing existing courses with an internet-based/distance-learning component or prompt new modules altogether. In addition, it is expected that VLE could become a significant way for students to access matters related to their studies. The SED stated that while takeup by course organisers was at an early stage, the College increasingly recognised the potential of a VLE for developing e-learning both on and off-campus. ESD has been in the vanguard of initiatives to encourage use of the VLE through offering assistance to staff in its use.

128 The SWS provided a generally positive view of the provision of learning resources. A questionnaire undertaken for the purposes of composing the SWS recorded 71 per cent approval of the provision of IT and 70 per cent approval of library services. In meetings with the audit team students did note concerns about the level of noise in the new Learning Resource Centre and sometimes the pressure on limited copies of books, and less often access to the libraries. But in general they were appreciative of the arrangements for access to both the libraries and IT centres, and the level of resources provided, and to other libraries within the University of London.

129 Overall, the audit team concluded that the learning resources made available to students were fit for purpose, and noted the College's commitment to invest further in electronic forms of information provision, including development of a single VLE.

Academic guidance, support and supervision

130 On enrolment all students receive a copy of the Student Guide which provides an outline of all the information a student is likely to need. This is supplemented by departmental handbooks. The Student Guide is available on the College's intranet, as should the departmental handbooks. The Student Guide was recently reviewed by the SSB.

131 Arrangements for academic advice and personal support vary between the four faculties and the SMD, and across departments in the faculties. In the faculties each student is allocated to a personal tutor and/or an academic adviser who is responsible for approving the students course of study and providing personal support. In addition, each department has a senior tutor, sometimes called a Director of Undergraduate Studies, whose role is to oversee the operation of the departmental adviser/tutor system. The SED noted that detailed arrangements vary by department, but stated that this system 'works well'. A recent development is the Peer Assisted Support System, in which new students are supported by senior students under the supervision of tutors.

132 The SWS noted some unevenness between departments in the promptness of feedback to students on their academic performance. Evidence heard by the audit team confirmed that there are different practices on the time it takes to provide feedback to students on their summative and formative coursework assessments. The College is encouraged to review the current diversity of practices regarding the timing of formal feedback to students on their academic performance and to consider whether college-wide policy and guidelines on this matter would enhance the quality of the student learning opportunities provided.

133 In the SMD there is a Dean for Student Affairs who has responsibility for the well-being of students

in all areas. The Dean is supported by a 'pastoral pool' of academic staff who can be directly approached by medical students for personal support and guidance. Again, the SED stated that these arrangements 'worked well'. In MBBS the SMD Education Directorate provides support to students. The SMD also operates a 'parent system' whereby a senior student is appointed to mentor new students throughout their early years of study.

134 The audit team learnt that in dentistry the personal tutor system is operated around a Progress File used for recording student learning, reflection and achievement. Each undergraduate student is issued with a Progress File and keeps it for the duration of their studies. Teachers and tutors maintain complimentary files which form the basis of their reports to the Senior Tutor (Dentistry) twice a year. Reports and achievements at in-course assessments and examinations similarly form the basis of twice yearly Progress Reviews carried out by the Dean of the Dental School and the Senior Tutor (Dentistry). Recommendations may then be forwarded to the Personal Tutor who will discuss these with the tutee and agree specific tasks and actions. These procedures are described in clear terms in web pages and handbooks. The team learned that students were very positive about this development. The team concluded that this was good practice and welcomed QECs decision to disseminate it more widely across the College.

135 The view of the arrangements for personal support and academic guidance contained in the SWS was somewhat mixed. The SWS reported that this varied across departments and faculties, and this view was generally confirmed in the audit team's meetings with students, and from a reading of the minutes of some SSLCs. However, the appointment of a Dean for Student Affairs in the SMD was positively endorsed in the SWS, and the SU suggested that a similarly dedicated and effective post might be created for the rest of the students in the College.

136 The LDU plays a key role in providing students with language and study skills support, with language courses available to students prior to enrolment and while registered at the College. In terms of skills development students can attend weekly drop-in sessions or book individual tutorials. In addition, the LDU, which the SED acknowledged would benefit from better resources, puts on special sessions in areas identified for development. In recent years this has included workshops on mathematics for Science and Engineering Foundation students. The SWS provided evidence of general satisfaction of students with the level of skills development.

137 The audit team concluded that overall the College's provision of academic guidance, support and supervision were generally satisfactory and often much valued by students as demonstrated in the results of the questionnaire recorded in the SWS. However, the team would encourage the College to achieve a greater level of consistency in the provision of support and guidance.

Personal support and guidance

138 The Strategic Plan 2001 to 2006 sets as a priority for the College 'to continue to work in partnership with the Students' Union to provide welfare, social and sports facilities which meet the needs of students and to involve students in the planning process'. The College provided Advice and Counselling Service (ACS) offers a free and confidential service covering three distinct areas: practical issues including financial matters, welfare benefits, immigration law and matters related to international students; professional guidance on a range of issues including emotional, personal and psychological problems; and disability support. The work of ACS is overseen by the SSB. The Registry is responsible for providing financial support to students through the Access to Learning Fund and the Student Assistance Fund.

139 The SED stated that the ACS 'is highly regarded by both students and staff'. ACS produces an AR to SSB which evaluates its services, including student views. The SWS confirmed the general satisfaction of students of College provision in this area; but both the SED and SWS recognised that the ACS was currently working at full capacity. The College is looking to relocate the ACS and is considering the provision of extra resources.

140 The College stresses the diversity of its student population, emphasising the extent to which this prevents it from seeing the student body in artificial 'blocks' of nationalities or ethnic categories. Accordingly, its induction processes and support services pay particular attention to the needs of groups, such as those entering the country for the first time, those requiring additional language skills, and those who may need advice on visas.

141 The College's Careers Service is part of the University of London Careers Service. It provides information and guidance to students and organises talks, workshops and seminars during term-time and careers fairs. The SED stated that the College is aware of the need to 'strengthen the service so as to improve the proportion of students in permanent employment soon after graduation', and thus the College is encouraging students to make early contact with the Careers Service. In their meetings

with the audit team students commented that in many cases careers advice could be improved, but noted the fact that in some departments an academic member of staff acts as a careers adviser. The Head of the Careers Service recently undertook a mapping exercise of provision against the *Code of Practice, Section 8: Career education, information and guidance.*

142 Through their meetings with students the audit team was able to explore in more detail the College's provision of personal support and guidance services. Generally, students confirmed the positive view of students contained within the SWS.

143 The audit team concluded that overall the College's personal support and guidance services were satisfactory and, in the case of support for international students, often of good quality. The team noted that the College, through SSB, were aware of the pressures on ACS and was considering how it could best address the matter.

Collaborative provision

144 University of London Ordinances require that any collaborative links with institutions outside of the University, whether within the UK or overseas, are approved by the Senate. Guidelines for establishing new collaborative links outside of the University intercollegiate degrees are published in the College's QA Handbook and generally reflect the precepts of the recently revised *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning.)* The QA Handbook is fairly brief but clearly states that where a department proposes to offer a programme of study in collaboration with another institution or institutions, procedures for non-standard programmes should apply. Hence, following consultation between the Academic Registrar, the QA Unit, the responsible head of department or equivalent, and relevant staff of the other institutions, collaborative programme arrangements have to be agreed both by the faculty or school board and QEC. The guidelines go onto list a number of quality assurance arrangements that have to be agreed, although they don't say whether these have to be agreed before the course commences, nor do they specify that a memorandum of agreement has to be signed. The overarching principle in the guidelines is that 'responsibility for quality assurance should normally rest with the institution carrying out the majority of the teaching, but with the proviso that monitoring information should be available to both institutions. Where teaching is shared equally, there should be a clear agreement on responsibility for quality assurance.

145 The College engages in a relatively small amount of collaborative provision. Four years ago it developed a joint programme in Journalism and Contemporary History with City University. The programme was separately approved by the quality assurance procedures of the College and City University, and a memorandum of cooperation was agreed laying down rules for the management of the programme, and specifying an annual monitoring report to both institutions. More recently the College has established a joint MSc in Public Health, again with City University. A distance-learning Master of Laws programme with University College London and the University of London, External Programme, has been established.

146 Over the years the College has developed a large number of links with business and the community that are not currently reflected in the mission statement. The development of these links has been a major cultural change for the institution that previously saw itself purely in national and international terms, but in line with a number of regeneration projects in its immediate vicinity it has sought to broaden its regional role through working more explicitly with local FECs. The College has, for example, recently applied for, and won, extra funding to provide Foundation Degrees. It was anticipated that one of these awards would start recruiting from September 2004, but this has now been delayed a year as work-based learning issues have taken longer to resolve than expected. In 2005 the College intends to run courses in Biomedical Sciences, Forensic Science and in Computing with Business. These programmes will be delivered at three local FE Colleges (City and Islington, Tower Hamlets, and Sir George Monoux College), with the organisation and responsibility for the quality assurance resting with the College.

147 Overseas collaborative links are small-scale but growing. In September 2004, for example, a 'double degree' collaborative link was established with the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications (BUPT) enabling students to receive degrees from both partner institutions. Initial undergraduate programmes will be offered in BSc (Eng) Telecommunications with Business Management and BSc (Eng) E-Commerce Engineering with Management and Law. The syllabus and teaching materials are based on the College's existing electronic engineering curricula, and are subject to the College's quality assurance systems. They will be taught entirely in China on the BUPT campus with approximately 50 per cent of the teaching over the whole four years being taught by each partner with almost all of the foundation year taught by BUPT, and a greater proportion of the following three years taught by College staff. All teaching will be in English

apart from the initial foundation stage which will be taught in a combination of Chinese and English. The College expects student enrolments to reach 1,000 by 2006. Two separate two-year research master's in Electronic Engineering and Computer Science are also now offered in conjunction with BUPT, with students spending their first year at BUPT and the second at the College. The link is managed by a joint Management Steering Committee appointed by the two partners and is subject to the terms of a joint programme agreement between them. This states that responsibility rests with an Academic Committee composed of three members from BUPT and three members from the College. The Academic Committee's decisions will be ratified by the Management Steering Committee and respective academic approval procedures of both BUPT and the College. The Academic Committee will conduct an annual review of the programmes and will submit a report to the relevant committees at both BUPT and the College. Other overseas collaborative activity is currently delivered through ODL which is reported on above (see paragraph 119 to 123).

148 The College's guidelines governing the quality assurance of collaborative programmes overseas was clearly developed prior to the links with BUPT. The audit team was aware that QEC had recently discussed this issue and encouraged the College to update the QA Handbook to take account of the new overseas collaborative programmes.

149 Overall, the audit team was satisfied that the quality assurance arrangements for collaborative provision were in essence identical to that of campus-based provision, but contain extra safeguards including oversight of programme approval and annual monitoring by QEC directly. The team noted that much of the College's collaborative ventures were 'bottom-up' initiatives from departments, as opportunities had arisen. The team is of the view that, given the College's plans for expansion in student numbers through overseas collaboration, there is now sufficient critical mass for it to consider a strategic review of its formal structures to specifically oversee the quality assurance of its collaborative provision and to ensure the sharing of good practice across the College.

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

Discipline audit trails

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

Computer Science

151 The Department of Computer Science is part of the Faculty of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences. The DAT focused on the following named awards: BSc (Hons) Computer Science, including that offered by the ODL Unit (422 students on the latter); MSc Computer Science; MSc and Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) in Advanced Methods in Computer Science and the MSc and PgDip in Information Technology. The ODL Unit was created in 1998-99 following a widening participation pilot which was aimed at establishing partnerships with employers and trade unions. The UK partners were BT, Royal Mail, the Communication Workers Union, and Connect UK. Overseas, the programme was also offered in partnership with the Institute for Vocational Education in Hong Kong. ODL student numbers were 205 in the UK and 217 in Hong Kong. The audit team was informed that recruitment on ODL programmes was expected to increase rapidly in the next four years to 1,000, with the majority of the growth anticipated through overseas collaboration.

152 The DSED comprised a self-appraisal document produced by the Department for the specific purpose of the audit. This was supplemented by a range of documentation including programme specifications, external examiner reports (2001 to 2004), ARs (2002-03 and 2003-04), course handbooks, and minutes of the Department's Teaching Committee and the SSLC.

153 The programme specifications followed the College template. They were related to the *Subject benchmark statement* for computing and modules took cognisance of the Association for Computing Machinery Computing Curricula 2001, and stated that all programmes were accredited by the relevant PRSB. The BSc Computer Science allows, for example, partial CEng accreditation and full exemption from the British Computer Society and Institution of Electrical Engineers. Approval for this accreditation was last given following a visit by these bodies in 2000 and the Department expects to undergo a further accreditation visit in Spring 2005. The programme specifications also stated the levels of the awards in terms of the FHEQ.

154 The Department underwent an internal review in June 2001 and the audit team was able to read the extensive and comprehensive documentation

submitted by the Department at that time. The process followed that prescribed by the College and, after discussing issues with the staff and tracking through the various responses made to QEC following the publication of the internal review report, the team concluded that the process was carried out in a robust manner. The team learnt that the Department found this exercise very useful, particularly as it helped them to clarify their procedures for ODL, an activity that was just being developed at the time. Formal annual programme monitoring consists of senior members of the Department producing an AR which is then discussed by the Department's Teaching Committee for onwards consideration by the Faculty Board. The ARs seen by the team were based on the College template, and included student feedback, the outcomes from peer review of teaching and external examiner feedback, and sought to address issues raised the previous year. While specific issues that needed attention were to some extent highlighted and then subsequently addressed, the team considered that the report would have benefited from a more comprehensive action plan. The team also considered that greater use could have been made of statistical analysis when producing the report.

155 In 2003 the Department opted to undertake a major review of core undergraduate syllabuses. This was triggered by a desire to update syllabuses and delivery methods in order to maintain the currency of the curriculum. The Department involved a number of external advisers in this process, including representatives of their Industrial Panel. Having now revised the full-time programmes, the Department is in the process of revising the ODL curricula which are benchmarked against them.

156 The audit team reviewed three years of external examiner reports (2001 to 2004) and noted their comprehensive nature. The team saw evidence of the Department acting on these reports and responding appropriately.

157 The DSED and the ARs contained limited evaluation of student progression and completion data. However, the audit team was able to ascertain through discussions with staff and reading additional documents, that progression rates had been improving over recent years and that the Department were actively engaged in addressing the major factors inhibiting further improvement. These included the relatively high failure rates on the first-year undergraduate programming modules and the consequences for referral, progression and completion, which the department were attempting to address through making the delivery more

practically based, and a small number of module design issues at master's level that were being addressed by a review of module content and delivery. The team endorsed these measures.

158 The audit team reviewed a limited range of examples of assessed coursework from the named awards. From the evidence seen it was apparent that detailed guidance had been given to students prior to embarking on the assessment task and that appropriate feedback had been provided by staff on their work. On the basis of the student work provided, and from detailed scrutiny of external examiner comments, the team found the standard of student achievement was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

159 The audit team was supplied with a number of student course handbooks and found them all to be informative and useful. The handbook provided to full-time undergraduate students was found to be particularly comprehensive, although the team did discover an error relating to the method by which degree classifications are calculated. Full-time students met by the team during the course of the DAT commented that the information provided to them about their courses prior to enrolment, during induction and throughout the duration of their programme was generally comprehensive and certainly useful and accurate, and had been improving over the years. ODL students also voiced the same comments but thought that more information could be provided about the workload involved, especially for mature students who had been out of education for some time. The Department may wish to consider this when preparing any new information for prospective ODL students.

160 The Department also produces an Academic Staff Handbook containing a compendium of useful information that a new or existing member of staff might need before commencing teaching; the audit team considered it as a model of its kind. Tutor Guides to UK and Overseas Delivery of ODL Degree Programmes are also helpfully produced to assist tutors and teaching assistants as they undertake their respective roles in on-line delivery. An exception to the general helpfulness of departmental handbooks was noted by the team. The department had made reference to the wrong degree classificatory system which had recently been introduced by AB. In general, however, the Department is to be congratulated for the quality of the documentation it provides to students and staff.

161 Student representatives attend the SSLC and also the Faculty Board, with the minutes of these meetings being made available on the College

website. Students confirmed that issues raised, through both formal and informal mechanisms, were acted upon. A recent example suggested by SSLC members was the production of posters describing the appeals procedure which were subsequently posted on the Departmental notice-board.

162 The Department's Teaching Committee initiates the peer review cycle which happens every semester. This is a mechanism to monitor and help improve teaching quality. Towards the end of each module students are asked to complete a questionnaire which then informs the meeting between the academic member of staff delivering the module and another member of the academic staff, who will have examined course materials and attended and observed one of the lectures and/or labs and tutorials. Following discussion and any constructive criticism a short report is completed which then automatically feeds into annual appraisal. Peer review of face-to-face teaching is less significant for ODL programmes, as formal teaching contact is much less than normal and as a result the main peer review mechanism is a post-sessional review meeting. The audit team learnt that the current system had been in operation since 2002 and that the scheme now embraced the majority of modules.

163 Each full-time student has an academic adviser. An adviser normally follows their group of students through all years of their programmes. All advisers are expected, in line with College policy, to make one hour a week available for their students to see them in person if required and to have structured review meetings with all their students to discuss progress at regular intervals. Following a successful pilot in 2002-03 the Department has reorganised a system of tutors to supplement this support for first-year students, staffed by trained PhD students. These tutors teach small groups of students and help them come to terms with course content and study skills, monitor attendance and report any problems to the Department office and the students adviser. Within ODL, distance-learning students have on-line access to team and individual mentors who, in particular, provide support and guidance.

164 Students met with during the course of the DAT included representatives from full-time and ODL programmes and were generally very positive when describing their experiences of studying at the College. All thought the courses were challenging and stimulating and generally appropriately resourced, with an appropriate focus on key and transferable skills. The one area where they thought that improvement could be made concerned the nature and timeliness of feedback on assessed work. As feedback to students

was also an issue raised in the SWS the Department may wish to consider developing a policy that ensures appropriate minimum standards for the extent and timeliness of staff written feedback; currently it remains one of many action points in the Department's Teaching and Learning Strategy. Notwithstanding this comment, overall, the audit team was satisfied that the quality of the learning opportunities was suitable for the programmes of study in computer science, leading to the named awards.

Economics

165 The DAT focused on the following named awards: BSc Economics; BSc Economics and Politics; MSc Economics; and MSc Financial Economics. The economics DSED was developed from the SED provided for the economics subject review in 2001, and included an evaluative update of subsequent developments and programme specifications for all economics undergraduate programmes.

166 The programme specifications for undergraduate programmes were written to a common template, and clearly reflect engagement with the *Subject benchmark statement* for economics. Learning outcomes have been mapped against the *Subject benchmark statement* for economics. At the postgraduate level, the Department responded to College criteria so that all its modules are at the master's level.

167 The economics subject team compile and use progression and completion data to inform the management and enhancement of standards and quality. For example, there has been considerable analysis of students' entry qualifications, principally GCSE Mathematics grade, and final degree grades. As a consequence, the subject team have provided additional mathematics classes and experimentation with streaming mathematics courses, resulting in both undergraduate and postgraduate completion rates improving.

168 The DSED outlined how the subject team had responded to matters raised in the 2001 QAA subject review report. While there has not been an internal subject review since 2001, the audit team read the most recent ARs for economics, and found that they were appropriately analytical and included views that students raised in the SSLCs.

169 External examiner reports read by the audit team confirmed the standards set for awards, and praised the achievements of students, and the fairness with which the Boards of Examiners made their decisions. The reports also provide an effective check on departmental assessment strategies and policies. A prominent example of the responsiveness of the

Department to the comments of external examiners in economics is that the College has introduced a simpler degree classification scheme which is intended in part to reduce strategic behaviour by some students in choosing their courses.

170 The audit team heard mixed responses from students about feedback on their work. The team learnt from staff that responses in the SWS differed from those in the Department's own teaching questionnaires. The latter made evident that, in general, students were not complaining about slow return of work by individual teachers, but about the structure of the examining process where marks for some reports were not released until long after the submission date.

171 The assessed student work seen by the audit team indicated that assessment matched the expectations of the programme specifications and student achievement was appropriate to the level of the award and their location within the FHEQ.

172 In response to a recommendation in the 2001 subject review report the Department has introduced a handbook for postgraduate students. The audit team considered that this, and the undergraduate handbook, were both clearly organised and presented, and could be downloaded from the Department's internal website. They gave much information of value to students, including details of the tutorial system and the role of tutors, emphasising points in the year at which students should make contact with their tutors.

173 A distinctive feature of the Department is the close connection its staff enjoy with major financial and economic institutions in its neighbourhood. This not only is apparent in its well established research culture, but also in terms of graduate employment levels with many students progressing to careers in the financial sector or postgraduate study.

174 All students are assigned an adviser, a role that is described in detail in the student handbooks. The Department seeks to ensure contact with students through making it mandatory for students to see their adviser so as to sign onto course units. The DSED stated that students are encouraged to refer to their adviser for advice on academic and other issues. However, students met by the audit team expressed a basic satisfaction with the value of their courses, but not always with the level of personal and academic support offered by the Department.

175 Student course questionnaires are the main way in which the Department reviews its teaching. Analysis of the questionnaires are discussed in Departmental meetings, and reported in the AR.

Statistical breakdowns of data allow the Head of Department to make objective comparisons of teaching quality across the Department, and the audit team saw evidence of action being taken in response to concerns about the quality of teaching.

176 Students are formally engaged in the management of academic quality through the SSLC. It normally comprises two members of staff, one or two undergraduates from each year, one master's level student and one postgraduate research student, and the minutes suggest that students are positively engaged in the process. The Head of Department may also attend. The committee is deemed to be advisory to the Head of Department, and considers and discusses an appropriate range of issues. Generally, the SSLC minutes seen by the audit team confirmed that it is an effective mechanism for students to raise concerns, and the team saw some evidence that the subject team responded to students' concerns. However, the team noted that a request for students to be able to view course outlines on the intranet from outside of the campus had not yet been fully resolved.

177 The audit team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to the students on the above named programmes were suitable for the programmes of study.

Engineering

178 Engineering is located in the Faculty of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences. At the time of the audit there were 444 students registered on programmes offered by the Department. The DAT focused on the following named awards: MEng Aerospace Engineering; BSc Computer Aided Engineering; BSc (Eng) Engineering; BSc (Eng) Engineering with Business Management; MSc Medical Electronics and Physics.

179 The Engineering DSED was the SED submitted for the 2004 IR. Programme specifications for the above programmes were appended to the DSED, and included general and specific aims of the programme, learning outcomes, the learning, teaching and assessment strategy and the structure of the programme. They reflected the Subject benchmark statements for Engineering and, where applicable, the name of the accreditation bodies. In addition, the audit team was provided with a wide range of relevant and useful information including AR reports (2002-03 and 2003-04), accreditation reports, samples of student work, departmental handbooks and prospectuses.

180 All BEng and MEng programmes in Aerospace, Mechanical Engineering and Medical Engineering

were accredited by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and The Royal Aeronautical Society in February 2003. Sports Engineering has received provisional accreditation by the same PRSBs. The accreditation reports generally complimented the Department on many positive aspects of the programmes but also highlighted some issues which the Department has subsequently addressed.

181 The ARs for 2002-03 and 2003-04 were informed by external examiners reports, the views of students through reports from the departmental SSLC and statistical evidence produced by the Department. The ARs demonstrated careful consideration of, and response to, issues raised by external examiners. However, although the ARs generally contained useful evaluation and effective tracking of action plans, it was not clear to the team how much consultation with staff and students occurred in the preparation of the reports.

182 The audit team was provided with the full documentation from the internal review in March 2004. The resulting report commended the Department on a number of matters including its approach to problem-based learning, the usefulness of the departmental quality manual, work to improve progression rates, endeavours to improve employability, the system for getting students' feedback and transparent dialogue with external examiners. The report also contained a number of recommendations for action including articulation of learning outcomes, use of level descriptors, timely return of adequate formative and summative feedback to students, training for personal tutors and the development of grade-related assessment criteria. An updated action plan to respond to the recommendations was also read by the team which showed substantial progress on most matters. The team considered that the engineering internal review was operated in accordance with the College's expectations and indicated that the Department is effective in its commitment to reflecting on its management and enhancement of standards and quality. Moreover, the team also tracked with approval consideration of the internal review report through the College's senior committees.

183 The audit team reviewed external examiner reports on programmes offered by the Engineering Department for the period 2001 to 2004. These were comprehensive and contained many constructive comments that the team considered would be helpful to the Department. Moreover, the team was able to track the Department's written responses on how it had responded to the comments from external examiners, and found that these were appropriate.

184 From its study of sampled assessed work, and from detailed scrutiny of external examiner comments, the audit team found the standard of student achievement to be appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

185 The Department provides undergraduate and postgraduate students with departmental handbooks. The audit team considered that both handbooks were clearly organised and presented, and could be downloaded from the department's intranet. They provided students with useful information about the Department, internal procedures, students' support, resources and safety. The students met by the team were generally very complimentary about the information and guidance they received. However, they did comment that although the departmental intranet is well designed and presented it can only be partially accessed from within the Department building, and this posed a problem for some students. The team had similar problems in accessing the Department's intranet and considered that it should review access arrangements.

186 The Department has a variety of formal and informal mechanisms to gather feedback from students. These include the SSLC, module questionnaires and the personal tutoring system. The SSLC provides the main formal path for student feedback to the Department. Minutes from the SSLC which are displayed on notice-boards will in the future be published on the Department's website. The audit team also considered a range of module questionnaires undertaken within the Department, which it felt provided another effective feedback route for students' views. Informal feedback is obtained through the tutoring system and fed through the personal tutors to the senior tutor. Students stated that issues raised through both formal and informal mechanisms were acted upon by the Department, and the team saw evidence of this in the SSLC minutes.

187 Students met by the audit team were generally very positive about their learning experience and the support available to them in the Engineering Department. They were satisfied with their representation and the feedback on issues they raised at SSLC. There were some issues of which the Department was aware and is addressing. These include the difficulties of providing timely structured feedback to students on their assessed work and students' complaints regarding some postgraduate demonstrators' communication/language problems. The Department is addressing the first problem by revising its assessment policy/timing and the second problem by providing staff development to postgraduate demonstrators.

188 First-year students had a timetabled weekly slot with their personal tutor. The role of the first-year tutorial system is to identify any problems, ensuring that students settle into the Department. Personal tutors also provide pastoral support where required. Problems that cannot be addressed by personal tutors are fed through to the senior tutor. For second and third years no weekly slot is designated but students are expected to meet with their personal tutors during each semester. Students tend to 'move away' from their personal tutors in years three and four when they work more closely with their project supervisors. Engineering students met by the audit team were generally positive about the system. Postgraduate students can access their dissertation tutor for issues related to academic support and guidance.

189 The audit team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students on the above named programmes were suitable 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

190 The College publishes a number of documents relevant to students including undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses, the Student Guide (the Guide) and departmental handbooks. The Guide is produced by the Registry which has responsibility for its accuracy, while the SSB has a responsibility for reviewing and amending the procedures and processes which it contains. The Guide contains information on a wide range of issues relevant to students including academic requirements, examination regulations, progression and the Complaints Procedure. The SWS stated that the Guide is comprehensive, and students met by the audit team expressed general satisfaction with the Guide but added that it currently contains too much fine print regulations. In response, the team learnt that SSB has already begun to review the content of the Guide. The Guide is also available on the College's intranet; however, the SWS stated that its location is very difficult to get to which limits its accessibility to students.

191 Publication of departmental handbooks are the responsibility of the head of department and should also be available on the department's website. Departmental handbooks contain important information about facilities, the role of advisers/tutors and senior tutors, the SSLC, regulations and procedures covering assessment and feedback.

192 During the audit the audit team was able to read the Guide, the prospectuses and a number of departmental and course handbooks. It noted that in general the College published sufficient information, and the students' view was that the information was reliable, accurate and complete. However, the team consider it desirable for the College to review the arrangements for students to access on the web both the Guide and departmental handbooks.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

193 The audit process included a check on the progress made by the College towards production of the information set out in the format recommended in HEFCE's document 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance.* A process for presenting this information has been implemented and overseen by QEC. Progress with the production of this information, including external examiners' reports, is on course for completion by May 2005.

194 The audit team was able to review an extensive range of published information which covered the majority of the requirements set out in HEFCE's document 03/15. From the information made available to the team and from the meetings it held with students there was no evidence to suggest inaccuracy in the information published, and students reported that the information they received was accurate, relevant and complete.

Findings

Findings

195 An institutional audit of Queen Mary, University of London (the College) was undertaken during the week 15 to 19 November 2004. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the College's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility to award University of London degrees. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Standing Conference of Principles (SCOP) and Universities UK (UUK), three audit trails 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 the College for enhancing current practice.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

196 The SED stated that the College's 'quality framework is based on the principle that all staff have responsibility for maintaining and improving the quality of the College's provision. Responsibility for assuring quality rests equally with all stakeholders, including lecturers, heads of department, departmental teaching committees, faculty boards and the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC)'. The Quality Assurance (QA) Handbook outlines the principles underpinning quality assurance including self-monitoring, review and report as the main characteristics along with an emphasis on quality management as 'a continual process' which operates within a college-wide system of procedures to promote shared understanding of basic requirements. Consistency of standards and procedures is achieved through coordination by the QA Unit and senior College officers. The Vice-Principal (Academic Policy) plays a pivotal role in these processes, chairing all the senior College committees concerned explicitly with quality assurance and enhancement. Individual academic deans and heads of department also play important roles in the working of the committee system. The audit team concluded on the basis of evidence heard that the effectiveness of the college-level systems relied quite heavily on key post holders, and especially the Vice-Principal (Academic Policy). The College is encouraged to consider whether the current balance between formal and informal processes for shaping policy and procedures relating to quality enhancement will sustain it into the future.

197 QEC has overall responsibility for the assurance of the quality of programmes, and thus oversees the approval, monitoring and review of all programmes of study at the College. QEC has devolved primary responsibility for new programme approval and amendments to existing programmes and course units to faculty and school education boards. As part of this devolved structure departmental level committees play a critically important role in the College's quality assurance framework. Evidence seen by the audit team confirmed that departments do have different committee names, structures and practices for progressing and reporting key aspects of quality assurance into the faculty level boards. There are a number of different names for committees carrying out broadly the same functions, with similar responsibilities and remits, across different departments. This potentially adds a layer of complexity for communicating across the institution about quality assurance matters.

198 Approval of new programmes is a two-stage process culminating in consideration by the faculty or education board of a full set of documentation including programme specifications. This process is facilitated by the QA Unit. QEC receives periodic reports, via the QA Unit, of all newly approved programmes. QEC retains, however, direct involvement in the approval of non-standard programmes such as those being proposed in collaboration with other institutions.

199 Annual monitoring is undertaken through Annual Reports (ARs) on undergraduate and postgraduate teaching which include all the programmes delivered that year within the department. The AR template requires descriptive and evaluative commentary on planning for teaching, teaching and learning (cross-referenced to the department Teaching and Learning Strategy), student recruitment, progression and award, learning resources, external examiner reports and student involvement in the maintenance of quality in the department. Departments approach the writing of these ARs in different ways but all must address the key headings in the College template. First-line responsibility for considering these reports rests with faculty or school education boards, with a faculty-level summary report of key issues raised in the relevant departmental ARs submitted to QEC by the Academic Dean.

200 The self-evaluation document (SED) described ARs as a key component of the College's quality assurance framework. The audit team learnt that QEC keeps under review the role of the AR process, and had recently decided that in spite of arguments put forward by various departments that the process was too arduous, it would remain as it was. Given the role prescribed for ARs the team welcome this

decision. The team noted, however, that currently ARs do not result in clear action plans which identify and track priorities for action, and advise the College to consider ways in which this might be achieved.

201 The College has recently introduced a system of six-yearly internal review of departments organised on a rolling basis, but does not systematically require periodic internal review of individual programmes. Internal review panels include at least two members who are external to the College, one of whom must also be external to the University of London. Departments are required to produce action plans on the basis of the internal review report and both the review report and the departmental response are considered by QEC. A report on progress against the action plan is required by QEC twelve months after the internal review event.

202 Feedback from students is gathered in a number of ways including through staff-student liaison committees (SSLCs), focus groups and questionnaires. The main mechanism for attaining student feedback at course unit level is an evaluative questionnaire. The QA Handbook contains a detailed Code of Practice on this process. Questionnaires should normally be completed at the end of each course, but the Code of Practice notes that mid-course and whole programme questionnaires may be useful. The Code of Practice sets out some areas for general consideration, but also it leaves scope for local adaptation. Summaries of student feedback, and departmental responses to them, are conveyed to SSLCs, relevant departmental committees and students via notice-boards. Student feedback is also reported in ARs and addressed during internal reviews. At the time of the audit visit, the College was piloting the use of internet-based questionnaires in several departments. The College's central services also use questionnaires to gather feedback from students. These are reported through the Student Services Board (SSB) to the Academic Board (AB) and other relevant senior committees. Students are also extensively represented on committees at various levels of the College, including faculty level committees and the main senior level committees. At the departmental level there is always at least one SSLC. However, students are not represented on other departmental level committees. The audit team concluded that the College's approach to gathering and utilising student feedback is generally sound. However, the team learnt of inconsistent approaches by some departments to using course questionnaires and involving students through SSLCs in the consideration of ARs.

203 The majority of the existing distance-learning programmes are coordinated by the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Unit located in the Department of Computer Science. At the time of the audit visit, examples of distance-learning programmes not managed by ODL included the Postgraduate Diploma in International Commercial Arbitration (in the Centre for Commercial Law Studies) and the MSc's in Internet Computing, e-Commerce Engineering, and Telecommunications, in the Department of Electronic Engineering. However, the College anticipates that within the next few years up to 20 per cent of students will be receiving teaching partly delivered by internet-based modules or other forms of distance learning. Approval of programmes involving distance learning requires consideration not only by the appropriate faculty or school board but also by QEC. Monitoring and review arrangements are the same as for standard programmes.

204 The College is aware of the current and future demands which provision of study opportunities by distance learning bring, especially in relation to student support, library services and staff development. One notable response to this has been production by the Department of Electronic Engineering of guidelines for ensuring quality in distance learning within the Department. This is a user-friendly guide to issues in the quality assurance of distance-learning provision in the Department which acknowledges the challenges as well as providing exemplars of ways to address them. It has been recommended for dissemination across the College and the audit team endorse the quality of this guide.

205 The College has a formal strategic alliance with City University which covers three joint taught programmes. There are also many collaborative arrangements with other colleges of the University of London, including a joint MSc in Freshwater and Coastal Sciences with University College London, and the College is cooperating with Royal Holloway on the future development of the University of London's British Institute in Paris. From 2005 the College intends to run Foundation Degree courses in biomedical sciences, forensic science and in computing with business. These programmes will be delivered at three local further education Colleges: City and Islington, Tower Hamlets and Sir George Monoux College. Overseas, the College has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications and it is anticipated that by 2006 there will be 1,000 students in China enrolled on the existing programmes. For the purposes of quality assurance, all programmes taught in collaboration with another institution are considered as non-standard. Accordingly, QEC is involved in programme

approval and receives AR and internal review reports which include any collaborative programmes. The audit team noted the increased level of scrutiny provided by these arrangements, but would encourage the College to review the current arrangements prior to what is likely to be a period of rapid development for collaborative provision. In particular, the team consider it desirable for the College to reflect on the practice of allowing collaborative programmes to commence prior to finalising collaborative agreements.

206 The College is of the view that, overall, the devolution of first-line responsibility for key quality assurance processes to the School of Medicine and Dentistry (SMD), faculties and departments is both appropriate and working effectively. The College recognises, however, that there are aspects of its procedures for assuring the quality of its programmes which could be enhanced. In particular, that it needs to find ways to ensure that the devolved system for programme approval will continue to deliver the level and quality of scrutiny that proposals require in order to assure the quality of new programmes, and that ARs also receive the degree of attention at college level which they warrant. The College is encouraged to pursue these particular enhancements to process.

207 The findings of the audit team confirm that broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the College's current and future management of the quality of its provision. At the heart of the quality assurance framework is the QA Handbook which the team considered as an example of good practice because of its clear, comprehensive yet concise nature. The College is advised to review the ways in which it identifies and tracks priorities for action arising from the annual monitoring process to ensure it continues to be able to assure the quality of provision.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards

208 QEC's engagement with standards is managed through an overview of external examiners' reports and its dealings with such items as subject benchmark statements and programme specifications. QEC also ensures that the direct approval of non-standard provision and all collaborative and open distance learning is routed through that committee. The faculty boards, and in particular, the deans on their behalf also play a role in securing academic standards by receiving external accreditation and review reports, monitoring admissions, recruitment, selection, assessment procedures and classification of awards, responses to external examiner reports and the appointment of examiners.

209 The College has its own implicit levels and awards framework which it has steadily been developing against the FHEQ. The announced move by the College to relate levels of study to learning outcomes based on generic learning outcomes for all courses by the end of 2004-05 will see a further evolution of the framework. The framework is used, in particular, to inform the production of programme specifications and the programme approval process requires faculty or education boards and, ultimately, QEC to reach an explicit judgement about standards. Programme annual monitoring and internal review also deal with aspects of standards and the College has a variety of its programmes accredited by a range of professional, regulatory and statutory review bodies. An annual overview of external examiners' reports is produced by the QA Unit for faculty and school boards and QEC to assist reappraisal of assessment processes in the light of their comments.

210 The College's present management information systems are nearing the end of their operational life and cannot adequately cope with the demands placed on them by academic departments. This has led to separate databases being created in departments which do not always match up with available central data, and has hindered the compilation of an easily accessible agreed standard dataset for generating programme level statistics and a common approach to their analysis. The College is actively pursuing a replacement management information system which it hopes will be up and running within the next two years, and will allow multi-access so as to allow both the central service departments and academic departments to be able to use centrally held data, thus obviating the need for separately held databases in individual departments.

211 According to the College's External Examiner Guidelines, external examiners play a vital role in the maintenance of academic standards and in ensuring rigorous but fair assessment procedures, and formally appoint all external examiners for programmes leading to its awards, including accredited and validated programmes. The QA Handbook and accompanying College documentation provides a code of good practice, which defines the role of the external examiner, the procedures for their appointment and the process for dealing with their reports. External examiners are required to produce their reports on a standard template, which asks a series of standards based questions and, in particular, whether or not they are able to confirm that the standard of the award is comparable with the expectations of similar awards elsewhere in the subject. In the SED the College

commented that the system for consideration of external examiners' comments is 'rigorous and ensures that issues are drawn out for consideration, whether they relate to subject issues or College-level problems'. From the evidence available to it the audit team concurred with this view. Through the discipline audit tails (DATs), in particular, the team reviewed external examiners' reports for a range of programmes and confirmed that prompt responses to comments were made. None of the reports seen by the team raised any significant concerns about the academic standards of the College's awards.

212 A number of critical comments were received from external examiners following the 2002 examinations which focused on the methods of classification. Following debate at the Examinations and Assessment Committee, and then the AB, the College decided to reduce the number of different methods of bachelor degree classification (previously in excess of 20) to two: one for disciplines reporting to the Arts and Engineering Degree Examination Boards, except for BA Geography and programmes in Electronic Engineering, and another method for disciplines reporting to the Science Degree Examination Board, including BA Geography and programmes in Electronic Engineering. The audit team welcomed this development but advise the College to keep the implementation of this change of policy under review to ensure that it operates effectively across the College.

213 The audit team is confident from its review of the QA Handbook that the procedures and guidelines are consistent with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Documents produced by the QA Unit also clearly provide useful guidance on qualifications and credit descriptors for staff having programme approval, review and delivery responsibilities. The DATs showed that subject benchmark statements are used effectively and are now generally reflected in programme specifications which are monitored through internal review.

214 The publication of an overview of external examiners' reports by the QA Unit for onward transmission to faculty and school boards and QEC is seen to be a useful development, and good preparation for the requirement to publish summaries of external examiners' reports as recommended in HEFCE's document 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance.*

215 The findings of the audit confirm that broad confidence can be placed in the College's present and likely future management of the academic

standards of its awards.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for supporting learning

216 The College's Teaching and Learning Strategy (2002 to 2005) in noting the diverse background of its students stated that the College would 'work to ensure that the needs of students from all backgrounds are met and that they are encouraged to achieve their full educational potential'. Students are supported in their learning by the College in a number of ways including through the provision of library and information technology resources and through academic and personal support.

217 The principal learning support resources are managed by Information Services (IS) and include library and information technology. There have been important new developments in both of these areas in recent years with the opening of a new Learning Resources Centre and investment in electronic information, and an emphasis placed on developing a virtual learning environment (VLE). College students can also access other libraries of the University of London. The IT Users Forum and the Library Users Forum, both of which include extensive staff and student representation, report to the IS Board which in turn reports to the AB.

218 During their studies students are issued with a number of handbooks including the Student Guide and departmental handbooks which provide detailed information on local arrangements and course information. The Student Guide, which has been recently reviewed by the SSB, contains important information about the complaints procedure and is available on the College intranet.

219 Students overall were satisfied with the information relating to their studies, and recognised the considerable developments in the provision of library and information technology. The main areas of concern for students related to remote access to the College's electronic information. The audit team encountered similar difficulties and encourage the College to review the different arrangements for student access to the College intranet.

220 Personal tutoring arrangements vary across the College, and often within faculties. In the four faculties undergraduate students are allocated on admission to a personal tutor or adviser. In most departments there is also a senior tutor, sometimes called a director of undergraduate studies, who maintains an overview of student progression and achievement. Recently, the College has introduced Peer Assisted Support System (PASS) which is

designed to provide new students with support from more senior students. The audit team learnt that the arrangements for personal tutoring not only varied in design but also in application across the four faculties. Students recounted varying levels of satisfaction with the arrangements and their effectiveness including a number of positive accounts especially related to PASS. In SMD there is a Dean for Student Affairs who has responsibility for student well-being. The Dean is supported by a 'pastoral pool' of named tutors whom students can approach in the first instance. The School's Education Directorate also provides support to students, and a 'parent system' links new students to senior students. SMD students were much more positive about the arrangements for personal tutoring than elsewhere in the College. In particular, students were enthusiastic about the use made of Progress Files in dentistry, and the team welcomed QECs decision to extend their use across the rest of the College.

221 The College provides a comprehensive range of personal and welfare support services, complemented by alternative independent services provided by the Students' Union advisory centre. The Advice and Counselling Service (ACS) produces an annual report which provides SSB with useful feedback about use of the services. Careers guidance is available through the Careers Service which is part of the University of London Careers Service. The Learning Development Unit (LDU) plays a key role providing students with relevant key and transferable skills. Students can either drop in to the Unit or book personal tutorials on specific topics. The LDU has also played an important role in helping new students from overseas to develop their language skills, both in preparation for and during their studies. The College has more than doubled its numbers of international students in four years, and was aware that such growth required increased provision of support services and, in particular, key learning skills including help with the English language. The College highlighted the fact that the ACS was currently working at full capacity, but the audit team noted that students were generally positive about the range and effectiveness of welfare support services.

222 The College's Human Resources Strategy outlines the College's approach to staff recruitment and development. There is a requirement for departments to implement peer review of teaching and the Educational and Staff Development (ESD) Unit has produced the helpful Observation of Teaching Handbook. The SED noted that some departments were more enthusiastic than others to implement a peer observation, unless stimulated by

external forces. The Queen Mary Performance Appraisal Scheme has recently been introduced and the team noted from their discussions with staff across the institution that it was broadly welcomed and that a high number of staff had been appraised as part of this scheme.

223 Staff development is largely undertaken by the ESD Unit and is overseen by the Teaching and Learning Quality Enhancement Group (TLQEG). ESD offers programmes for both full and part-time staff. These can lead to a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice and a Certificate in Learning and Teaching (CILT). The College recognised that these schemes were under pressure currently as the demand for places exceeded demand. However, the College was in the process of considerably increasing the number of places on the CILT. ESD also provides an extensive range of leaflets to help lecturers develop their teaching styles, lays on a number of special sessions during the academic year and they have been proactive in assisting staff involved in distance learning. The audit team considered the work in general of the ESD in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning across the institution as a feature of good practice. Teaching excellence is recognised in a number of ways including schemes sponsored by the Drapers' Company; the team considered students' nominations of candidates for these prizes through SSLCs as good practice.

224 The College considered the effectiveness of its support arrangements at various points in the SED. It was sometimes frank in discussing the difficulties of matching finite resources to rapidly changing needs, but believed that its strategies helped translate broad ambitions into reasonable targets that could be regularly monitored. The College was confident that the provision of learning support resources provided for students were generally appropriate, and that they were catering for the needs of the diverse student population. However, there was little evaluation of the effectiveness of the College's mechanisms for gathering and analysing the views of students and other stakeholders on learning support resources. It was not clear to the audit team as to how the College maintained a formal overview of the adequacy of resources to support learning. SSB, which has a remit to oversee all matters related to student welfare, and ISB which oversees both library and information technology, both report directly to the AB. The College may wish to consider the effectiveness of mechanisms to ensure that the work of both the SSB and ISB impacts upon the management and enhancement of quality.

Outcomes of discipline audit trails

Computer science

225 The DAT focused on the following named awards: BSc (Hons) Computer Science, including that offered by the ODL Unit; MSc Computer Science; MSc and Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) in Advanced Methods in Computer Science; and MSc and PgDip Information Technology. The ODL Unit was created in 1998-1999 and has successfully recruited students in the UK and overseas. The programme specifications seen by the audit team were related to the *Subject benchmark statement* for computing, and all the Department's programmes were accredited by the relevant professional, regulatory and statutory body. The Department last underwent an internal review in 2001 and the audit team concluded that this was carried out with appropriate rigour. In 2003 the Department opted to undertake a further major review of core syllabuses in order to ensure that they remained current in what is a rapidly developing subject area. The team viewed the most recent external examiners' reports and a sample of students assessed work and concluded that the standards achieved by students was appropriate for the above named awards located within the FHEQ.

226 The handbooks provided by the Department to students were found to be useful and informative, and the one for undergraduates was particularly comprehensive. All students, including ODL students, were generally complimentary about the information provided by the Department, although the latter suggested that more information on workload would help those returning to education after a break. The audit team particularly commented on the nature of the Tutor Guides to UK and Overseas Delivery of ODL Degree Programmes which assisted staff in undertaking their respective roles in on-line delivery. At enrolment each student is allocated to an adviser who normally stays with that student throughout their time at the College. In addition, the Department has recently introduced a scheme for trained PhD students to act as tutors to students. Students met by the team were generally positive about their experience at the College although there was some negative comment about the nature and timeliness of feedback on assessed work. It is an indication of the responsiveness of the Department's mechanisms for involving students in quality assurance matters that this is a matter already on the Department's Teaching and Learning Strategy. Overall, the team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the above named awards.

Economics

227 The DAT focused on the following named awards: BSc Economics; BSc Economics and Politics; MSc Economics; and MSc Financial Economics. The Economics Department is within the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences. Programme specifications set out appropriate learning outcomes and linked these clearly to teaching, learning and assessment. The undergraduate programme specifications were formulated using the relevant *Subject benchmark statement* for economics as a reference point. From its study of the students' assessed work, and from its discussions with staff and students, the audit team found that the standard of student achievement was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

228 The audit team learnt that students were generally positive about the quality of learning support within the provision. They were satisfied with the professional value of their programmes, with the learning resources placed at their disposal, and with the availability of personal tutors, a feature highlighted by the SWS survey. Students particularly valued the learning opportunities provided by engagement with staff who had personal experience of major financial institutions. They found the information provided through programme handbooks and the Department's website clear and helpful. They did, however, express some concerns about timeliness of feedback, particularly in relation to project work which was examined at a later date. The team found that the quality of the learning opportunities available to students was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the above named awards.

Engineering

229 The DAT focused on the following named awards: MEng Aerospace Engineering; BSc Computer Aided Engineering; BSc (Eng) Engineering; BSc (Eng) Engineering with Business Management; and MSc Medical Electronics and Physics. All BEng and MEng programmes in aerospace, mechanical engineering and medical engineering were accredited by The Institution of mechanical engineers and The Royal Aeronautical Society in 2003. The programme specifications followed the College template and the content reflected the *Subject benchmark statement* for engineering. Documentation supporting the 2004 internal review was read by the audit team and demonstrated that the subject team conscientiously followed the College's procedures. ARs read by the team were also comprehensive in content, although the team considered that there might be greater consultation with all staff and students. External examiners' reports and the sample of assessed work

seen by the team confirmed that student achievement on the above named programmes is appropriate to their location within the FHEQ.

230 Students were generally complimentary about the information they received throughout the duration of their studies. They also reported favourably on the effectiveness and responsiveness of both formal and informal mechanisms the Department used to gather feedback. Students did report some concerns related to the provision of timely structured feedback on assessed work and understanding postgraduate demonstrators employed by the Department. However, the team noted that the Department has already begun to address these issues. The team commented on the good design and presentation of the Department's intranet, but noted problems with access for students outside of departmental buildings.

The use made by the institution of the Academic Infrastructure

231 The SED stated that the College uses the Academic Infrastructure to 'inform its internal quality procedures'. Discussion with staff revealed that the College has found the Academic Infrastructure to be of value in the design of all its provision and the team observed that it makes extensive use of it. The audit team learnt of a number of examples where the various elements of the Infrastructure had affected policies and were reflected in a number of internal publications including the External Examiner Guidelines, guidelines for producing SEDs for internal review, Notes for Guidance for the Development of New Courses, and the approach taken when developing ODL courses.

232 There is a College template for the design of programme specifications which reflects the College's intention that the specifications are written with students in mind. In tracking the progress of a number of new programme approval applications the audit team saw evidence that new programme specifications made reference to relevant subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ. However, although all programmes are now required to have programme specifications the team saw some variation in their quality.

233 The audit team noted that the College is making progress with its plans to redesign all courses to relate levels to leaning outcomes, based on generic learning outcomes. It was told by senior members of the College that they will complete this process by the end of 2004-05, and the team would encourage the College to adhere to this timetable. The SED stated that after making the above changes

the College felt that it would be following 'the FHEQ with one exception; postgraduate conversion programmes are called master's degrees (in line with accepted convention) even though little of the material is likely to be at level 'M'. The team concluded that this is not in line with good practice elsewhere in the sector, and would advise the College to give this matter urgent attention.

234 The audit team found that College procedures generally reflected the various sections of the *Code of practice*. The QA Unit and QEC routinely consider developments of the *Code* and the team was provided with a number of audit trails demonstrating how College procedures mapped against the *Code*. The team also noted that QEC had recently considered revised versions of the *Code* relating to external examiners and collaborative provision.

235 With the announced intention to rapidly complete the task of relating levels of study to learning outcomes for all courses all that remains to ensure full engagement with the FHEQ is for the College to reconsider the role of its master's conversion courses within the framework. Therefore, on the evidence available to it, the audit team concluded that the College in general has responded effectively to the development of the Academic Infrastructure.

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

236 The structure of the SED was based upon a DfES consultation document for degree awarding powers. As such it contained some useful discussion of the structure and operation of the Colleges' procedures for the management and enhancement of standards and quality which was helpful to the audit team. However, it did not always explain the complexity of the structure and operation of the system, or of the College in a way that was easy to grasp for somebody from outside the institution.

237 The SED was sometimes frank and honest in its evaluation of the College's procedures. The audit team concluded, however, that the SED was not cast in the philosophy of a quality enhancement approach, offering little feeling of a thoughtful approach to following through loops, and seeking to improve effectiveness. This approach did not fully reflect the extent of the College's approach to the management and enhancement of standards and quality which became more evident to the team as it gained an understanding of the internal structure of the College and read a number of internal documents.

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

238 The College believes it has made real progress in strengthening its quality assurance processes and improving the quality of education for students since the last external audit report was published in 2000. However, senior members of the College made clear that it is not complacent about future challenges to be met. The SED identified a range of plans for further enhancement of the quality of provision and student learning opportunities.

239 The College is in the process of reviewing its committee structure to ensure that it is working effectively, particularly of the Council and its subcommittees. As part of this review QEC has rescheduled some of its meetings so it can better meet the timing of programme approval applications. The audit team welcomed these developments, but would suggest to the College that it might also review the nomenclature of faculty and departmental committees to facilitate the easy transmission of good practices across the institution.

240 The College is pursuing a number of initiatives relating to improving the collection of student feedback, and the audit team would encourage the College with these endeavours. These include extending the pilots aimed at increasing student involvement in SSLCs and further developing the use of on-line questionnaires to gather student feedback on courses and the provision of central services.

241 The audit team was made aware that the College recognised the limitations of its existing management information system and was actively considering a replacement. The College is considering a system that would serve a number of functions, and might be linked to a VLE. The team recognised the complexity of the issues surrounding this project and welcomed the fact that the College was giving the matter careful consideration.

242 The audit team noted the College's steady progress with relating qualification level descriptors to learning outcomes. The team was assured by senior members of the College that this process would be completed by the end of 2004-05. The team would advise the College this is completed in accordance with this timetable, at the same time as reviewing its approach to conversion master's.

243 In recent years the College has decided to devolve the management of many matters related to quality and standards to either the faculty and school level or to departmental level. The audit team recognised that in many instances this has been effective and that many departments have taken on these new responsibilities. TLQEG, which reports to QEC, has a wide quality enhancement remit, including advising on staff development needs relating to teaching, learning and assessment and other quality related matters. Evidence seen and heard by the team confirmed that TLQEG is perceived by staff to be, and is in practice, a key and effective quality enhancement policy driver within the College. In this connection, ESD is also seen as having a major role to inform policy development. The team noted as good practice ESD's key role in leading and coordinating the implementation of policy initiatives relating to quality enhancement. However, it was not always clear to the team how TLQEG would formally become aware of all the good practice across the different areas of the College. The team recognised the pivotal role of the Vice-Principal (Academic Policy) by chairing the main committees relating to standards and quality in this process, but would encourage the College to consider other opportunities to ensure that good practice is widely shared across the College.

Reliability of information

244 The audit team was able to view a variety of College, School, faculty and departmental publications as well as its website. The team concluded from the evidence that was available to them the information provided to students was appropriate, and had no reason to doubt that it was accurate and reliable. Moreover, the team was satisfied that the College's preparations to meet the requirements of HEFCE's document 03/51, were well advanced and that the College should meet the deadline.

Features of good practice

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

- the clear, comprehensive yet concise nature of the QA Handbook (paragraph 41)

- student membership of internal (periodic) review panels (paragraph 66)

- the responsive and, simultaneously, strategic role of ESD in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning across the institution (paragraphs 114, 122 and 127)

- the Drapers' Awards for excellence in teaching and especially the process of receiving nominations from SSLCs (paragraph 115)

- the development and implementation of undergraduate progress files in dentistry (paragraph 134)

- the guidelines on quality assurance of, and issues related to, the provision of distance learning produced by the Department of Electronic Engineering and the work of the ODL Unit more generally (paragraphs 121 and 159)

- the various institutional and departmental initiatives related to the integration of key and transferable skills into the curriculum (paragraphs 136 and 164).

Recommendations for action

246 Recommendations for action that are advisable:

- keep under review application of the recently introduced methods for classifying degrees (paragraphs 45 and 160)

- review the most effective means for the identification and tracking of priorities for action in ARs on teaching (paragraphs 62 and 181)

- ensure that its intentions of relating qualification level descriptors to learning outcomes is completed, and applied to all programme levels (paragraphs 81 and 82).

247 Recommendations for action that are desirable:

- reflect on the arrangements for quality assuring collaborative programmes and, in particular, the practice to commence a programme prior to finalising collaborative agreements (paragraph 148)

- review College policy on the timeliness of feedback on student work (paragraphs 164 and 187)

- consider whether a more standardised nomenclature for faculty quality structures would assist in the effective dissemination of good practice (paragraph 43)

- review the different arrangements for student access to the intranet (paragraphs 126, 176, 185).

Appendix

Queen Mary, University of London's response to the audit report

Queen Mary, University of London, welcomes the conclusion, contained in the Audit Report, that broad confidence can be placed in the academic standards of its awards, and in the present and future management of the quality of its programmes. The College is also pleased that the three Discipline Audit Trails fully supported this overall statement of confidence and demonstrated examples of good practice and innovation.

The College has confidence in the devolved nature of its quality assurance procedures, which emphasise that high standards of teaching are best obtained when quality is embedded at grass roots level, and all academic staff have full ownership of quality within their development, and recognise it in the classroom. The devolved quality assurance processes are complemented by a quality enhancement structure which propagates good practice and embeds the latest developments in teaching pedagogy and quality. The Audit Report identifies a number of examples of good practice which stem from the resources devoted to quality enhancement.

Most of the recommendations in the Audit Report refer to issues which were highlighted in the Self Evaluation Document as matters that required to be addressed. Some of these were already in the process of being implemented. A schedule of action has now been agreed for the recommendations with the aim of implementation within a year.

Our students are our best asset and their active involvement in all aspects of the Institutional Audit undoubtedly contributed towards its successful outcome. Their participation in active learning and in all aspects of the taught programmes was recognised by the Audit Report and will continue to be a source of strength in the year's ahead.