



# **Institutional audit**

**Guildhall School of Music & Drama**

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## Preface

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. To this end, QAA carries out Institutional audits of higher education institutions.

In England and Northern Ireland QAA conducts Institutional audits on behalf of the higher education sector, to provide public information about the maintenance of academic standards and the assurance of the quality of learning opportunities provided for students. It also operates under contract to the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland to provide evidence to meet their statutory obligations to assure the quality and standards of academic programmes for which they disburse public funding. The audit method was developed in partnership with the funding councils and the higher education representative bodies, and agreed following consultation with higher education institutions and other interested organisations. The method was endorsed by the then Department for Education and Skills. It was revised in 2006 following recommendations from the Quality Assurance Framework Review Group, a representative group established to review the structures and processes of quality assurance in England and Northern Ireland, and to evaluate the work of QAA.

Institutional audit is an evidence-based process carried out through peer review. It forms part of the Quality Assurance Framework established in 2002 following revisions to the United Kingdom's (UK's) approach to external quality assurance. At the centre of the process is an emphasis on students and their learning.

The aim of the Institutional audit process is to meet the public interest in knowing that universities and colleges of higher education in England and Northern Ireland have effective means of:

- ensuring that the awards and qualifications in higher education are of an academic standard at least consistent with those referred to in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and are, where relevant, exercising their powers as degree awarding bodies in a proper manner
- providing learning opportunities of a quality that enables students, whether on taught or research programmes, to achieve those higher education awards and qualifications
- enhancing the quality of their educational provision, particularly by building on information gained through monitoring, internal and external reviews and on feedback from stakeholders.

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 academic standards of awards
- the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.
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Audit teams also comment specifically on:

- the institution's arrangements for maintaining appropriate academic standards and the quality of provision of postgraduate research programmes
- the institution's approach to developing and implementing institutional strategies for enhancing the quality of its educational provision, both taught and by research

- the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the institution publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

If the audit includes the institution's collaborative provision the judgements and comments also apply unless the audit team considers that any of its judgements or comments in respect of the collaborative provision differ from those in respect of the institution's 'home' provision. Any such differences will be reflected in the form of words used to express a judgement or comment on 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.

## **Explanatory note on the format for the report and the annex**

The reports of quality audits have to be useful to several audiences. The revised Institutional audit process makes a clear distinction between that part of the reporting process aimed at an external audience and that aimed at the institution. There are three elements to the reporting:

- the **summary** of the findings of the report, including the judgements, is intended for the wider public, especially potential students
- the **report** is an overview of the findings of the audit for both lay and external professional audiences
- a separate **annex** provides the detail and explanations behind the findings of the audit and is intended to be of practical use to the institution.

The report is as concise as is consistent with providing enough detail for it to make sense to an external audience as a stand-alone document. The summary, the report and the annex are published on QAA's website.

## Summary

### Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (the School) from 14 to 18 June 2010 to carry out an Institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the learning opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards that the School offers on behalf of City University London.

To arrive at its conclusions, the audit team spoke to members of staff throughout the School and to current students, and read a wide range of documents about the ways in which the School manages the academic aspects of its provision.

In Institutional audit, the institution's management of both academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities are audited. The term 'academic standards' is 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. The term 'quality of learning opportunities' is used to describe the support provided by an institution to enable students to achieve the awards. It is about the provision of appropriate teaching, support and assessment for the students.

### Outcomes of the Institutional audit

As a result of its investigations, the audit team's view of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama is that:

- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the School's present and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards that it offers on behalf of the City University London
- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the School's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

### Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The School is committed to ensuring and developing the quality of learning experiences, but at present does not have a planned and strategic approach to, or agreed definition of, enhancement, relying on a range of formal and informal processes based on a shared ethos for improving the learning opportunities of its students.

### Postgraduate research students

The supervision and support arrangements for postgraduate research students are satisfactory and meet the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*.

### Published information

Reliance can largely be placed on the accuracy of the information the School publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

## Features of good practice

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

- the scope and content of the research training programme for the MPhil/DMus
- the annual School-wide staff re-induction event.

## Recommendations for action

The audit team recommends that the School consider further action in some areas.

The team **advises** the School to:

- develop and implement a set of policies and procedures which ensures the broad equivalence of student learning opportunities across the institution as a whole
- review the adequacy of its present deliberative structure to ensure the systematic, comprehensive management and effective discharge of its responsibilities for quality and standards
- establish formal and systematic module-level monitoring as a requirement in annual programme evaluation
- ensure that annual monitoring invariably involves the comprehensive and rigorous analysis of all relevant information
- develop a comprehensive induction and training programme for external assessors
- ensure that external examiners' moderating role is never compromised by direct participation in any element of assessment
- ensure that careful consideration is given to all aspects of student feedback, and the outcome of that consideration is effectively and appropriately communicated to all students concerned
- ensure the fitness for purpose of its English language admission requirements and their consistent and comprehensive implementation.

It would be **desirable** for the School to:

- strengthen its procedures for assuring a systematic and comprehensive engagement with the Academic Infrastructure
- establish clear reporting lines to a higher institutional level for the Staff/Student Liaison Committee
- ensure that publicly-available admissions criteria accurately reflect its admissions policy
- take a more strategic approach to improving the quality of learning opportunities
- establish and implement a policy for the systematic training of staff appointed to teaching roles.

## Reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings, the audit team investigated the use made by the School of the Academic Infrastructure, which provides a means of describing academic standards in UK higher education. It allows for diversity and innovation within academic programmes offered by higher education. QAA worked with the higher education sector to establish the various parts of the Academic Infrastructure, which are:

- the *Code of practice*
- the frameworks for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and in Scotland
- subject benchmark statements

- programme specifications.

The audit team found that the School's response to the Academic Infrastructure is currently insufficiently systematised.

## Report

1 An Institutional audit of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (the School) was undertaken in the week commencing 14 June 2010. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the School's management of the academic standards of its awards and of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

2 The audit team comprised Professor M Davies, Ms B Howell, Professor P Manning, Mr T Massey, Dr S Ryrie and Mrs L Puttick, audit secretary. The audit was coordinated for QAA by Professor R Harris, Assistant Director, Reviews Group.

### Section 1: Introduction and background

3 The School, which is owned by the City of London Corporation, does not have degree awarding powers. Its programmes of study leading to degrees and diplomas are validated by City University London (the University; the validating institution). It is situated in the Barbican, where a number of productive alliances contribute to it being the largest provider of specialist music education in the United Kingdom, with educational provision ranging from Key Stage 1 to doctoral level. The School's Strategic Plan specifies an ambition for the School to become an international centre of excellence and a global leader of creative and professional practice in music and drama. Its 509 undergraduate and 216 postgraduate students are taught in one of two academic directorates, Music and Drama. Both of these offer taught undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and Music offers two research degree programmes, one jointly with the University and one validated.

4 In 2006, an Institutional audit was conducted in connection with the School's application for designation as a higher education institution. This judged that broad confidence could be placed in the soundness of the School's current and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of awards. The report identified four features of good practice and four areas where change would be desirable. The present audit team found that while the School has largely continued to perform strongly in the areas of good practice, its approach to the recommendations has been less consistent. Accordingly, some of the areas concerned re-emerge as issues in this report.

5 Among the organisational changes introduced since 2006, of greatest relevance to the present audit is the streamlining of the School's committee structure. This involved the absorption of the work of four former committees by a newly-constituted Teaching & Learning Board, responsible to the Board of Governors and (as appropriate) the University for the quality of teaching provision, academic standards and academic reputation. The audit team found that the wide-ranging nature of these responsibilities, combined with the absence of any other formally-constituted institutional-level committee, means that some important items are not fully discussed; and that the weight of business draws the Board into day-to-day administration at the expense of proactive strategic planning. It is advisable for the School to review the adequacy of its present deliberative structure to ensure the systematic, comprehensive management and effective discharge of its responsibilities for quality and standards.

6 Operational responsibility for programme development and review falls to the two programme boards (Music and Drama). Each board is chaired by a senior member of staff from the other academic directorate, with the aim of facilitating cross-school understanding and the sharing of good practice. This arrangement is satisfactory.



## Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

7 The validating institution has direct responsibility for the academic standards of the awards made in its name. It appoints external examiners on the School's recommendation and specifies and monitors their main duties. The audit team confirms that external examiners' reports are made available to student representatives, and that the School discharges those administrative and professional assessment responsibilities required of or devolved to it competently and professionally.

8 The School makes extensive use of specialist external assessors to bring independent expertise to the assessment of performance in Music. They are appointed by the Programme Board under delegated powers in a manner considered both robust and transparent. The audit team found that (i) external assessors are clear about the marking criteria; (ii) their written feedback to students is constructive and appropriate; and (iii) their views form part of the annual programme evaluation (see paragraph 11), albeit to a variable degree across the Directorate. Nevertheless, the team also found significant gaps in their training, induction and support, with the result that they are in some cases unclear about the completion, purpose or destination of their monitoring report. It is advisable for the School to develop a comprehensive induction and training programme for external assessors.

9 The audit team found two cases (one in each directorate) of external examiners also serving as, in effect, external assessors. In Drama, where performance assessment is involved, no other external examiner is in place to oversee the process; in Music, where other external examiners are in post, the examiner is assessing not performance but written work. This is not part of external assessors' prescribed duties. The arrangement is inappropriate, should be unnecessary and potentially compromises academic standards: it is advisable for the School to ensure that external examiners' moderating role is never compromised by direct participation in any element of assessment.

10 Programme approval, the procedures for which are clear and widely available, involves executive pre-approval followed by a full process conducted with due regard to external input and expectations. The audit team found the School's operation of the process robust and professional: the School discharges its programme approval responsibilities with due regard to assuring academic standards and the quality of learning.

11 Annual programme evaluation is based on a comprehensive range of internal and external reports and student feedback. While confirming that the School operates annual programme evaluation generally conscientiously and (in at least one element) in an exemplary manner, the audit team found that: (i) in spite of the terms of reference of the bodies concerned, not all annual programme evaluation reports are discussed in detail by both programme boards and Teaching & Learning Board; (ii) the absence of a requirement for module-level annual monitoring results in inconsistent implementation; (iii) a 2006 recommendation relating to annual monitoring questionnaires has still to be fully addressed; (iv) variable formal attention is devoted to discussing external assessors' reports, which are received in summary form only; and (v) graduate destination data are not considered by all units within the Drama Directorate. It is advisable for the School to establish formal and systematic module-level monitoring as a requirement in annual programme evaluation.

12 Periodic review takes place quinquennially at discipline level and is linked to revalidation; the procedures are clear and widely available. The audit team found that the system is properly conducted, and a helpful precursor to revalidation.

13 In terms of external reference points, the audit team found that the Academic Regulatory Framework is appropriately aligned with national requirements and expectations; the Regulations are consistently applied; the School's approach to the requirements of professional or regulatory bodies is active and engaged; and research methodology training in the MPhil/DMus takes account of (and transcends) the Research Councils' joint statement

on skills training (see paragraph 36). Nevertheless, the team also found that institutional-level engagement with higher education's external infrastructure, though not unsatisfactory, is less developed than discipline-level engagement with professional and regulatory bodies; and, particularly, that the School has yet to create an overarching institutional-level framework for deliberating on the nature of its engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. It is desirable that the School strengthen its procedures for assuring a systematic and comprehensive engagement with the Academic Infrastructure.

14 While responsibility for assessment rests with the validating institution, the specialist nature of the disciplines involved requires that the School assures the alignment of assessment not only with University requirements but also with conservatoire norms. This is achieved in principle by the Academic Regulatory Framework and in practice by the programme assessment boards and the School Assessment Board. In addition, a programme-level annual report incorporating statistical analysis is now submitted to the Teaching & Learning Board. The quality and depth of analysis contained in one such report led the Board to comment that the universal adoption of this approach would be beneficial. The audit team's findings support this view.

15 Students, while identifying positive aspects of the assessment procedures, reported (i) inconsistent implementation of late submission penalties; (ii) difficulties in understanding assessment criteria in one directorate; (iii) concerns about the impartiality of some marking arrangements in the same directorate; and (iv) on some occasions a lack of sensitivity or confidentiality in giving feedback. These concerns resonate with other evidence known to the School, and remedial measures are under development. They are, however, symptomatic of disparities between the opportunities available to students in the two directorates. The audit found that the School has yet to distinguish fully between legitimate discipline-level differences and practices based on custom or tradition, which lead to unnecessary and unjustifiable inconsistencies and inequalities. It is advisable for the School to develop and implement a set of policies and procedures, which ensures the broad equivalence of student learning opportunities across the institution as a whole (see also paragraphs 27 and 29).

16 In terms of statistical information, the School states that a student data system is firmly embedded, and that its streamlined structure situates responsibility for management information in a single location which produces and distributes comprehensive data sets. The audit team found, however, a significant lacuna in respect of graduate destination data. Whereas this is of particular concern since, as stated earlier (see paragraph 11), these data are not considered consistently or systematically in annual programme evaluation, variability was also found in departments' consideration of progression and achievement data in annual programme evaluation. It follows that the School has yet to extract maximum value from its evaluation of statistical data. It is advisable for the School to ensure that annual monitoring invariably involves the comprehensive and rigorous analysis of all relevant information.

17 Overall, confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the School's current and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards it offers on behalf of City University London.

### **Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities**

18 The School-level Staff/Student Liaison Committee chaired by the Principal enables representatives from all departments to discuss non-artistic and non-academic matters with senior staff: but while this Committee has lively and forthright discussions about a wide range of important issues, its value and status would be increased were it to have formal standing within the deliberative structure. It is desirable that the School establishes clear reporting lines to a higher institutional level for the Staff/Student Liaison Committee.

19 The School, which invites students to complete an annual programme and module evaluation form, has achieved a very high response rate to the National Student Survey, but

acknowledges that it has had only limited success in obtaining student feedback internally. At the time of the audit it had recently addressed the recommendations of an internal audit of student surveys in an attempt to increase response rates; the effectiveness of its methods of responding to feedback by increased use of the intranet; and the utility of the surveys by question standardisation. These reforms, while intrinsically beneficial, may not suffice to address the element of student disengagement from the higher education quality process found in the course of the audit. Hence committee representation, though widely available, keenly encouraged and supported by a clear and comprehensive Handbook and training package, is variably successful (some representatives fail to engage effectively with their constituents; timetable clashes prevent many from attending meetings), and students in general, whose priorities may lie elsewhere, pay only selective attention to electronic communications. While in a small institution many issues can be resolved informally and satisfactorily, such an approach, however appreciated by students, does not offer a holistic perspective on their views of a kind that can support policy development and quality enhancement. It is advisable for the School to ensure that careful consideration is given to all aspects of student feedback, and the outcome of that consideration effectively and appropriately communicated to all students concerned.

20 In terms of the contribution of research and scholarship to student learning, the School's research strategy is broad in scope, and the audit team found widespread staff enthusiasm for research development. While the team found instances of staff research contributing directly to teaching, there is scope for the further development of a systematic, deliberate and explicit approach to the use of research in teaching.

21 While face-to-face delivery is the dominant mode of study, the School is also giving consideration to a thoughtful draft e-learning strategy. The School makes widespread use of placements, with some students permitted to substitute professional work for School-based tuition by following a scheme of study devised to ensure academic equivalence. The audit team found the guidance documents for supervisors and students clearly set out, effective in explaining the nature of placements, and aligned with the precepts of the *Code of practice: Section 9*.

22 In terms of learning resources, the School aims, through its Information Strategy, to enhance provision to a world-class level. It acknowledges that, in general, the objectives of the Information Strategy are aspirational. Students reported satisfaction with both library and information technology facilities, and the audit team found that the management of these resources enables the School to assure itself that resources are allocated appropriately and with students in mind. Nevertheless, many performance-related resources, which include theatres, practice rooms, musical instruments and recording studios, are under considerable strain. Serious space limitations exist, and these inevitably affect the student experience: this problem will not be resolved until the completion of an ambitious £84 million expansion project in three years' time. In the meantime, the School has sought to ameliorate the situation by interim measures, and, more strategically, by creating a platform of shared services with the Barbican Centre and the London Symphony Orchestra, an arrangement with significant enhancement potential. Nevertheless, without decisive remedial action students will continue to experience what they currently consider inadequate learning space until academic year 2013-14.

23 The School's Admissions Policy states that selection is based purely on talent: applications from potential candidates whose qualifications fall outside or below those prescribed are therefore encouraged. This position, however, is modified in the publications most likely to be read by candidates, and it is desirable that the School ensure that publicly-available admissions criteria accurately reflect its admissions policy. Nevertheless, the School's commitment to widening participation is beyond doubt: a significant minority of non-standard candidates is admitted and the School has meticulous procedures for handling such applications.

24 Given the School's dual emphasis on Music and Drama it is understandable that its English language admission criteria differ by programme. The audit involved examining the manner in which the School monitors the appropriateness of these criteria. It was found that for the MA/BA Acting, although students' written work is assessed, candidates' language competence is assessed only orally. Related to this, the Teaching & Learning Board has expressed concern that some students have insufficient English language skills on entry and that some candidates are admitted without taking a language proficiency test. While the School is responding to these concerns by reinforcing its rules, it has yet to review the consistency and appropriateness of its English language admission requirements as a whole. It is advisable that the School ensure the fitness for purpose of its English language admission requirements and their consistent and comprehensive implementation.

25 The Executive Directorate and the Teaching & Learning Board monitor admissions: the former receives progress reports throughout the cycle and a retrospective report is also submitted to the latter, which, in addition, receives an analysis of each intake by gender, ethnicity, age and disability; relevant data are supplied to the programme boards and the University. Collectively, this constitutes a sound approach to monitoring, reviewing and responding to admissions data.

26 The School gives high priority to student support. The Student Affairs Department offers a wide range of services: it takes steps, in collaboration with academic staff, to identify and act upon the needs of individual students, and has a noteworthy case conference system at which staff review and evaluate such support with the student concerned. Students praised the services provided, but found the Department somewhat lacking in visibility and accessibility. They were unaware, for example, of the out-of-hours service, likely to be particularly valuable given the extensive contact time involved in some performance arts.

27 Students were similarly unaware that a formal induction programme is universally available, drawing attention to what they considered operational disparities, including the fact that some, but not all, students have access to a 'buddy' system; they were unclear why different students have different opportunities for induction and support. The audit team identified this issue as a further dimension of an earlier recommendation (see paragraph 15).

28 Academic support is appropriately organised and available: students reported academic staff as accessible and supportive, and tutoring arrangements, while variable, as useful. The School offers special schemes of study for students such as non-standard entrants and those who break their studies, to accommodate personal circumstances and allow them to meet necessary learning objectives and outcomes on the basis of parity of treatment with other students.

29 The School affords high priority to employability, embedding employment skills within the curriculum. While drama students spoke highly of the available networking opportunities, music students claimed to have fewer such opportunities (see paragraphs 15 and 27). The audit team was unable to find evidence of the School giving formal consideration, in annual monitoring or elsewhere, to the implications of the annual survey of First Destination Statistics for its careers guidance strategy.

30 In terms of staff support, the School supplements the City of London Corporation's human resources policies with its own requirements. These include appointing only excellent teachers, ensuring appropriate induction and making appropriate staff development provision. Teaching staff reported that the quality of their teaching is valued by heads of department and properly recognised, though the audit team found that such recognition would be facilitated were a universal peer observation scheme to be introduced. The School does not offer structured training in teaching and assessment for newly-appointed staff; nor, in spite of its heavy reliance on specialist and fractional teachers, does it have a policy or strategy to define the categories of staff required or expected to undertake such training

elsewhere. It is desirable that the School establishes and implements a policy for the systematic training of staff appointed to teaching roles.

31 A re-induction day for all teaching staff takes place close to the start of each academic year. The audit team found this particularly effective in furthering academic staff's awareness of the breadth of work undertaken; facilitating the sharing of practice and experience; and enabling the exploration of the potential for joint working in other areas. Noting also the enthusiasm shown by staff members who have attended these events and the examples they provided of the re-induction day's impact on their work, the team identified the annual School-wide staff re-induction event as a feature of good practice.

32 The audit team found that confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the School's present and likely future management of the learning opportunities available to its students.

## **Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement**

33 Although the School has no explicit definition of quality enhancement, it regards enhancement as involving 'the pursuit of excellence' and believes it to be embedded in all its educational activities. Its approach involves exploiting the opportunities offered by the forthcoming new building (see paragraph 22); research developments; strategies to improve the quality of learning opportunities; and opening the School to a broader range of people. The audit team found staff aware of, and engaging keenly with, these themes, but also that they are not invariably translated into practice. In particular, while the annual programme evaluation template provides for the identification of good practice, the relevant section of the form is variably well completed, and where good practice is identified, little discussion takes place as to how it might best be disseminated or strategised.

34 Overall, while the School aspires to become an international centre of excellence and a global leader in music and drama training (see paragraph 3), it does not have a planned and strategic approach to, or agreed definition of, enhancement, relying on a range of formal and informal processes based on a shared ethos for improving the learning opportunities of its students. It is desirable that the School takes a more strategic approach to improving the quality of learning opportunities.

## **Section 5: Collaborative arrangements**

35 The School has no collaborative provision as defined in the *Code of practice: Section 2*; nor does it offer flexible or distributed learning.

## **Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students**

36 The School entered the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, subsequently receiving its first tranche of quality-related funding; it has appointed an Assistant Principal for Research and Development; and it has taken steps, which appear both appropriate and realistic, to develop a research infrastructure and environment. In particular, it has added a validated research degree programme (MPhil/DMus) to a pre-existing programme offered jointly with the University; the contents of both relate closely to staff research interests. The audit team found that the School conducts those aspects of admission, induction, training, supervision, upgrading, monitoring, support and examination for which it is responsible in a scrupulous and professional way. In particular, the research skills training for the MPhil/DMus comprises three seminar-based modules in each of the three years of study, developing skills relevant and appropriate to the stages of progress. This carefully-planned and incremental programme is meticulously designed, attracted extremely positive comments from students familiar with it, and not only reflects but also transcends the Research

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Councils' joint statement on skills training. The scope and content of the School's research training programme for the MPhil/DMus are identified as a feature of good practice.

37 The supervision and support arrangements for postgraduate research students are satisfactory and meet the expectations of the *Code of practice: Section 1*.

## Section 7: Published information

38 The Marketing & Communications Manager is a single control point for the prospectus, website and some internal materials; the Registry is responsible for most other materials designed for students, for example checking and signing off programme handbooks, the preparation of which is the responsibility of the department concerned. Such handbooks specify the requirements for passing and progression; they are complemented by department handbooks and intranet literature, which provide additional detailed and practical information.

39 Effecting liaison among the main producers of information for publication falls to a Communications Working Group, with representation from across the School. This Group gathers feedback from departments on all forms of communications and their content; discusses developments; and monitors usage data. The audit team found these arrangements generally satisfactory.

40 Students described the handbooks as clear, concise and accurate, and as providing all necessary information. They confirmed the completeness and usefulness of the website, in particular the information provided for applicants, thereby confirming the very high satisfaction levels reported in an internal survey. Subject only to the qualification concerning the consistency of presentation of the School's Admissions Policy (see paragraph 23), the audit findings confirm this view.

41 Each year the School publishes an authoritative (Gold Copy) internal document for each programme, to serve as the key reference point by incorporating all amendments approved for that year. It has responded to past inaccuracies by instituting rectification procedures, the effectiveness of which it will doubtless monitor with care.

42 It is confirmed that the externally available information required by the Higher Education Funding Council for England guidelines is published on the School's website, and that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the teaching quality information on the Unistats website appears accurate and complete.

43 Reliance can largely be placed on the accuracy of the information the School publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

## Section 8: Features of good practice and recommendations

### Features of good practice

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

- the scope and content of the research training programme for the MPhil/DMus (paragraphs 13, 36)
- the annual School-wide staff re-induction event (paragraph 31).

### Recommendations for action

45 Recommendations for action that is **advisable**:

- review the adequacy of its present deliberative structure to ensure the systematic, comprehensive management and effective discharge of its responsibilities for quality and standards (paragraph 5)
- develop a comprehensive induction and training programme for external assessors (paragraph 8)
- ensure that external examiners' moderating role is never compromised by direct participation in any element of assessment (paragraph 9)
- establish formal and systematic module-level monitoring as a requirement in annual programme evaluation (paragraph 11)
- develop and implement a set of policies and procedures which ensures the broad equivalence of student learning opportunities across the institution as a whole (paragraphs 15, 27, 29)
- ensure that annual monitoring invariably involves the comprehensive and rigorous analysis of all relevant information (paragraph 16)
- ensure that careful consideration is given to all aspects of student feedback, and the outcome of that consideration effectively and appropriately communicated to all students concerned (paragraph 19)
- ensure the fitness for purpose of its English language admission requirements and their consistent and comprehensive implementation (paragraph 24).

46 Recommendations for action that is **desirable**:

- strengthen its procedures for assuring a systematic and comprehensive engagement with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 13)
- establish clear reporting lines to a higher institutional level for the Staff/Student Liaison Committee (paragraph 18)
- ensure that publicly-available admissions criteria accurately reflect its admissions policy (paragraphs 23, 40)
- establish and implement a policy for the systematic training of staff appointed to teaching roles (paragraph 30)
- take a more strategic approach to improving the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 34).

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