Periodic and Partner Review of the College of Estate Management

November 2011
Introduction

1  A review of the partnership operating with the College of Estate Management and the programmes validated by the University delivered by the College was held on 22 and 23 November 2011.

2  The members of the review Panel were:
   • Dr P Woodman, Faculty co-Director for Teaching and Learning, Arts, Humanities and Social Science (Chair)
   • Dr D Jukes, School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy
   • Dr J Doak, School of Real Estate and Planning
   • Mr P Collins, Nottingham Trent University
   • Dr H Mellar, Institute of Education, University of London
   • Mr S Barthorpe, MITIE Group PLC
   • Mrs R Dearlove, International Quality Support Manager (Secretary)

3  The Panel met a wide range of staff at the College. Full details are given in Annex 1.

4  The Panel met with a number of students and alumni representing a range of programmes delivered with the College.

5  The Panel also met with staff representing the link from the University:
   • Dr Orla Kennedy, Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning, Science
   • Ms Sally Adams, Sub-Dean Faculty of Science and Life Sciences
   • Prof Stuart Green, Head of the School of Construction Management and Engineering
   • Dr Geoff Cook, Director of Teaching and Learning, School of Construction Management and Engineering

6  The programmes considered as part of this review were
   • BSc Building Surveying
   • BSc Estate Management
   • BSc Property Management
   • BSc Quantity Surveying
   • BSc Building Services Quantity Surveying
   • BSc Construction Management
   • Postgraduate Diploma/MSc Surveying
   • MSc Real Estate
   • MSc Conservation of the Historic Environment
   • MSc Facilities Management
   • MSc Property Investment
   • MBA Construction and Real Estate (only for cohorts admitted before September 2010)
Background

7 The University has worked in partnership with the College since 1969. The College has operated from the University’s Whiteknight’s campus since 1972 and the University took over the validation of degree programmes delivered by the College at that point.

8 The relationship between the University and the College has evolved and changed considerably over the last forty years with a gradual shift in the last decade in particular to greater independence by the College in terms of delivery and curriculum development, leading to more of a ‘validation’ arrangement with the University.

9 All degree programmes delivered by the College, with the exception of the MBA Construction and Real Estate for cohorts from September 2010, are currently validated by the University and result in an award of the University. The College also runs a wide range of professional diploma courses, in many cases accredited by the relevant professional body, resulting in a diploma awarded by the College. In addition the College has a Framework for Lifelong Learning to facilitate CPD activity.

10 The College has recently decided, with the support of the University, that it would seek to gain its own degree awarding powers and become an entirely independent higher education institution. It is the intention that when the College becomes able to award its own degrees, the University will cease validation of degree programmes, whilst providing continuity for students currently enrolled on validated programmes.

General observations

11 The Panel met with a range of staff during the Review process and wished to express its gratitude to all those who had participated.

12 It was clear to the Panel that the College is a highly regarded provider of distance learning education in the area of real estate, construction and affiliated subjects. Its systems and processes are well suited to managing the complex process of delivering learning materials to students all over the world, providing support to students at a distance, and managing large numbers of external academic staff.

13 The College is in a period of substantial change and transition, preparing to become a degree awarding body in its own right. The College has also begun a process of fundamental review of its courses and degree programmes, seeking to modernise and transform programmes to take advantage of advancements in technology for the provision of distance education through the development of a ‘New Academic Offer’. The Panel were provided with a two page summary relating to the principles behind the New Academic Offer but specific programme modifications relating to this process have not been considered as part of this review. The Panel noted as a point of good practice the College’s commitment to ongoing innovation in online and distance delivery [Good practice b].

Main characteristics of the programmes under review

14 The panel considers that the programmes under review:
   a) draw upon, and are enhanced by, the expertise of practising professionals and other external inputs;
   b) have real world applicability;
   c) are highly relevant for students and for their future careers;
d) are respected by employers and enhanced by being accredited by a range of relevant professional bodies;

e) are accessible to working professionals to who might otherwise not be able to study at this level.

**Academic standards of the programmes**

**Educational aims of the provision and the learning outcomes**

15 The Panel was provided with evidence in the form of programme specifications, module descriptions, student handbooks, external examiners’ reports and student work. It also held a number of meetings with staff and students, and read a small number of examples of student work. The Panel noted that the provision covered both undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, all of which delivered on a distance learning basis.

16 The Panel reviewed the educational aims and learning outcomes of the provision. In relation to both the Undergraduate and the Postgraduate programmes, the Panel confirmed that these were clearly stated and comprehensive and were appropriate to the overall aims and had been informed by the relevant Subject Benchmarking Statement and by the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, notwithstanding the issues outlined below.

17 The Panel confirmed that whilst in general Programmes and modules were placed at the appropriate level, there was some concern about the clarity of distinction between similar modules offered at both Level 6 and Level 7. There was also a concern that where undergraduate and postgraduate programmes covered similar areas the programme level outcomes were not sufficiently distinguished. The panel **recommends** that the College should review the learning outcomes at both a programme and module level in order to appropriately differentiate between undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in line with the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, this is particularly in relation to programmes where a similar module or programme is taught at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels [**Recommendation b**].

18 The panel also noted that some Masters programmes did not include the minimum of 150 out of 180 credits at Level 7 required by the University Credit and Qualifications Framework (UCQF). The panel **recommends** that the number of credits at level 7 in Masters awards be brought into line with University Credit and Qualifications Framework [**Recommendation a**].

19 With regard to Programme Specifications, whilst they were in place for all degree programmes, the Panel noted that they were not entirely in alignment with the University’s template for Programme Specifications. The Panel **recommends** that the College review all of its current Programme Specifications to bring them into line with the University’s current template [**Recommendation t**].

**Curricula and assessment**

20 The Panel welcomed the breadth and relevance of the curricula across all programmes under review. It felt that the programmes were coherent, of appropriate breadth and scope, and provided students with the opportunity to achieve, and to demonstrate achievement of, the intended learning outcomes.
The Panel agreed that although key topics in the field were covered in Programmes in the manner to be expected, that this was not always evident in the College’s promotional and informational material. The panel recommends that it is made more visible to students and other stakeholders that programmes address key issues in the current business and professional environment like sustainability, corporate social responsibility and health and safety [Recommendation f]. The panel also recommends that the subject of logistics should be covered within the module Construction Planning, Tendering and Finance module (F311PTF) as part of the BSc Construction Management [Recommendation m].

Whilst the Panel were aware that the College is primarily a teaching focused institution, they were pleased to see evidence – particularly the College’s Research Papers series – that the College was seeking to engage students with research on a general level. The Panel confirmed through conversation with academic staff (both full time and associate) that up-to-date scholarship in the discipline is being incorporated into teaching materials both on an ongoing basis as well as part of formal course review.

The Panel noted the significant proportion of international students registered with the College and in line with broader developments in Higher Education recommends that the College ensure that the opportunity is taken to internationalise both the curriculum and wider operation of the College as part of the on-going course review process [Recommendation i].

The Panel recognised that certain limitations are placed on teaching strategies through the nature of distance learning delivery, however, with the exploration of new learning technologies and delivery techniques as part of the ‘New Academic Offer’ the Panel felt that there would be great benefit to incorporating new ways of encouraging the development of professional and transferable skills into existing programmes. The Panel recognises the progress and innovation already made in a number of modules, in particular: the use of the virtual learning environment to facilitate discussion. Noted particularly in relation to its implementation in ethics, the group work opportunities that arise as part of the integrated MSc project and the icebreaking period which forms part of the MSc Facilities Management [Good practice c, d, e and f]. However, the panel recommends that in relation to the undergraduate offering, the College is encouraged to look at innovative ways of developing professional and transferable skills (particularly group work and oral communication skills) in the student body [Recommendation n].

The Panel noted that the majority of students of the College are currently engaged in employment related to the qualification they are undertaking. Whilst this renders the University’s recently introduced requirement for a work placement opportunity to be included in all undergraduate degree programmes moot, the Panel felt that a consideration of how the student’s own work experience could be formally incorporated into programmes would be of value. The panel recommends that the College consider the development of an explicitly work based learning module where students would gain credit for experiential and reflective learning gained through their employment [Recommendation p].

The Panel was provided with examples of student work, including examination scripts, and also saw a number of External Examiners’ reports. Those Reports verified that the standards achieved by students met the expectations for awards as measured against the relevant Subject Benchmarking Statement and the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. However, the Panel noted that a number of external examiners reports were missing along with a large number of the College’s responses to the reports. Whilst on occasion reports may not be submitted by External Examiners,
and if this is the case it is important that it is noted as it is normal University policy for those Examiners not to be reappointed, the absence of responses from the College was of concern. The Panel noted that whilst the majority of reports raised no significant issues, the absence of responses meant that where issues had been raised there was no mechanism for checking whether or not they had been noted and addressed. The panel recommends that the College should ensure that all external examiner reports are kept and that responses are produced for all reports received, and that responses to external examiners are appended to annual programme reports [Recommendation c].

27 The Panel noted that the College currently uses a range of assessment methods, with a particular focus on traditional coursework assignments and formal written examinations for most modules. Whilst for some modules the number of individual assignments seemed relatively large, the Panel recognised that there is a benefit for students following a self-study programme to have regular opportunities to submit work for assessment in terms of receiving feedback on understanding on a regular basis and also motivating disciplined study habits. To further enhance this, the Panel recommends that the opportunities for formative and self-assessment be extended more widely across modules in order to support student learning. This should focus particularly on early undergraduate modules that have higher failure rates [Recommendation j].

28 Assessment tasks and examination questions are prepared by a range of staff, both full time academic staff of the College and Associate Tutors, and are subject to internal moderation. The Panel were confident in the College’s processes for ensuring the appropriateness of assessment tasks and examination questions. Students receive feedback on each piece of assessed work and for the majority of modules are provided with an outline answer. The College appeared to managing the complex process of providing feedback to students studying at a distance admirably and the Panel recommends that the College continue in its efforts to enhance the quality and timeliness of feedback to students [Recommendation k].

29 The management of examinations and assessment is covered in paragraphs 55 to 62 below.

Use of student management information

30 Annual Programme Reports included the expected sets of student management information and appeared to show the College using this to inform programme and module design. However, the Panel were disappointed not to see greater evidence of the use of data on student use of the VLE system beyond simple statistics on students logging into the system. The Panel recommends that the College seek to take full advantage of the data available on student interaction with the VLE in order to reflect on the effectiveness of the VLE and the material it contains [Recommendation e].

Quality of learning opportunities offered by the programmes

Teaching and learning

31 The College’s programmes are primarily delivered through the means of self-study. Students study modules either in parallel or sequentially depending on the structure of the course, with materials sent out according to a pre-determined schedule which includes deadlines for coursework and dates for examinations. Students are supported by tutors who facilitate and moderate on-line discussion using the College’s Virtual
Learning Environment (VLE) and interact with students on an individual basis regarding assignments (see paragraphs 43 to 47 on learning resources).

32 The College also provides live face to face teaching for many courses in the UK, primarily in Reading, but also for some courses in York and at sites overseas when justified by numbers. The Panel recognises the limits placed on the College’s ability to offer live face to face teaching by the requirement that such sessions be financially viable. The Panel were pleased to see the College is increasingly seeking to implement synchronous live teaching using web based technologies, and recognise the enhancement that this is likely to give to the learning experience of students who cannot attend face to face teaching sessions.

Student admission and progression

33 The operation of the student admission process is entirely delegated by the University to the College. Admission to University validated Programmes is based on the admission criteria recorded in the relevant Programme Specification. Straightforward admissions decisions can be made by the Admissions team with non-standard admissions queries being referred to the Colleges Admissions Committee. The Panel agreed that the admissions process appeared to be being managed in a very professional and efficient manner and was in alignment with admissions policy and principles in operation at the University. Students reported that they found the admissions process straightforward and efficient.

34 The Panel were impressed at the College’s progression and retention rates given the challenge of keeping distance and part time learners engaged with study. The Panel noted the role of employer/sponsors in motivating students and the efforts made by the College to manage relationships in this area.

Student information and support

35 The College provides information to prospective students through its website, which contains full details of its entire academic offering, and through its printed prospectus.

36 On registration students are provided with hardcopy information supplied with their initial ‘study binders’ along with details on how to access online information through the VLE.

37 The Panel were informed during the visit that work had been undertaken to develop an online induction ‘module’ which is intended to be made available to students in the future. This was not intended to be compulsory for students to complete before beginning formal study. The Panel were concerned that whilst the College provides a wide range of resources which students may access to enhance their study skills, at the moment most of the information was presented for passive and optional consumption, with the risk that the students most in need of such additional information and guidance would not choose to access the materials. The Panel recommends that the new induction module developed be made a compulsory part of all programmes [Recommendation h].

38 The College provides a Student Handbook to all students on enrolment both in hardcopy and electronically through the VLE. The University template for Programme Handbooks is expected to be followed for all degree programmes, and whilst it allows a great deal of freedom for individual providers and Schools to add material as they see fit there are core sections of text/information which are expected to be included. The Student Handbook provided by the College is a useful and comprehensive document for students but it does not include the University required text in a number of areas, for
example the section on academic misconduct. The Panel recommends that the College review its Student Handbooks to ensure they meet the minimum University requirements [Recommendation t].

39 The College does not operate a personal tutor system as is required of other programmes with University. Support is offered to students primarily by Course Administrators, for pastoral support and general queries, and individual Course and Module leaders for academic support. This system seemed to be working well. Students were very clear about where to get help and were particularly complementary of the support they had received. The panel noted as a point of good practice the value of a team of committed, professional and flexible Course Administrators and their vital role in managing relationships with students [Good practice f].

40 With regard to the provision of careers information and guidance in relation to personal and professional development, the Panel recognises the status of the majority of students as already in relevant employment and supports the College’s focus on professional and career development. However, feedback from students and alumni indicated that students would appreciate some more ‘practical’ support for career development. In particular alumni noted that undertaking degrees should put them in a better position to apply for other jobs in other organisations and would therefore welcome support in this area. The panel noted the advice already provided by the College but recommends that the College consider offering some more hands on and interactive support for students in relation to updating career management skills, including guidance on CV presentation, job applications and career change [Recommendation o].

41 Student complaints at the College are dealt with through a formal student complaints procedure with initial informal stages, formal stages and finally recourse to the validating body. The Panel agreed that this was in line with the University’s normal expectation for the handling of complaints for students on collaborative programmes. Students who wish to appeal against an academic decision are referred directly to the University’s procedures.

42 The College has in place a Disability and Special Needs policy which addresses all areas of the student life-cycle from admissions to examinations.

**Learning resources**

43 The Panel noted that, in accordance with University policy, students on validated Programmes are not entitled to access to University Library resources beyond that of a normal member of the public. All responsibility for providing learning resources is delegated to the College.

44 As a distance learning provider the College has extensive experience in the development of study materials to guide students by independent study to achieve the learning outcomes required. The core learning resources provided to students take the form of substantial ‘module study binders’ containing all materials required for students to grasp the fundamentals of the module - College produced ‘study papers’, essential textbooks and guides to assignments and examinations - and in essence are designed to allow a student to pass the assessment without recourse to further materials.

45 The Panel examined study binders for an undergraduate and a postgraduate module and found them to be well organised and comprehensive. Whilst the Panel recognised that it is not unusual in traditional distance learning for students to be provided with core materials which enable them to pass assessment without recourse to further
materials, the Panel felt that more emphasis could be placed by the College on the benefits to students using wider materials to enhance their studies and ensure that independent research skills are developed. The students that the Panel met were clear that they needed to go beyond the study binders to achieve higher marks, but with the range of abilities and experience of study present in the College’s student population, the Panel recommends that greater emphasis on this in course materials, student handbooks and on the VLE would be beneficial [Recommendation q].

46 The College’s Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) provides students access to further learning and study support materials, and acts as the key repository of information on relevant policies and sources of help. The Panel was given access to a ‘student view’ of the VLE for an undergraduate programme. Module sections included PDF versions of all study papers, access to online discussion forums which are monitored by the relevant academic staff for that module, links to external websites and e-library resources. Discussions with students revealed that they regard interaction with the VLE as a fundamental part of their study. They also noted the significantly improved experience as a result of the move to the new VLE. The Panel recognises the College’s move in recent course development to move to an increasing focus on the provision of electronic resources over hard copy and also the development of more interactive learning materials taking advantages of opportunities offered by modern technology. Some students reported finding the Athens system difficult to operate. The Panel recommends that further easily accessible information be provided to ensure students are given help in accessing the Athens Gateway [Recommendation l].

47 The Panel hopes the College will continue to enhance existing provision with these developments in addition to the focus on the New Academic Offer.

Employer engagement

48 The programmes delivered by the College are primarily tailored for individuals already working in the relevant fields, with most students undertaking study whilst working. In many cases students are sponsored by their organisations.

49 The College has good engagement with the profession through regular engagement with professional bodies and through many of its associate tutors, many of whom are active professionals, and are engaged specifically for their up to date professional experience. Employers are engaged with curriculum through participation in Course Advisory Boards and Subject Advisory Committees, and hold two seats on the Academic Board.

50 The panel heard that the College is developing its alumni relations and this is clearly an area of much potential. It might be worth the College exploring the Reading Real Estate Foundation as a possible model for harnessing its alumni for the benefit of both alumni and students.

Areas of delegated academic responsibility

Programme design, approval and modification and review processes

51 All validated programmes at the College are subject to the same design, approval and modification processes common to all University of Reading programmes and as such are required to demonstrate alignment with relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). New programmes and proposed modifications to existing programmes are initially submitted through the
School of Construction Management and Engineering and processed through the appropriate approval route within the University.

52 The College provided the Panel with a copy of its Course Design, Approval, Monitoring and Review document. As for University programmes, University processes are followed and the Panel had no formal comments to make on the design and approval section of this document which is followed for College programmes. However the Panel suggested that the College may wish to revisit this document to ensure its alignment with the UK Quality Code - Chapter B1: Programme design and approval as there is currently no mention of at what point Subject Benchmark Statements or the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications is considered in the design process.

53 The College is required to complete the University’s standard Annual Programme Report in relation to all validated Programmes which it does after completing its own ‘Course Review’ process. The Panel noted that these had been completed to expected standards and to the University’s requirements. The timing of submission of Annual Programme Reports to the University had been an issue in the past, created primarily due to the different academic calendar operated by the College. This seems to have been resolved as part of the development of the Operational Handbook (see paragraph 83).

54 The College operates its own annual ‘Course Content Review’ process to review the study materials provided for each course. This seemed to be the main mechanism by which the actual study material content of courses is reviewed but the Panel noted that it is important that this process fully engages with the academic substance of the course, the rationale for its existence, the overall approach to the subject’s delivery as well as the more detailed consideration of which course materials continued to be appropriate and relevant. The panel noted as a point of good practice the opportunities the College ensures are in place for Course Administrators to feed into enhancement and development of programmes [Good practice g].

Management of assessment and examination

55 The Panel were provided with copies of the ‘Assessment, progression and award Regulations’ for both BSc and MSc degrees. The Panel found this document confusing and open to a number of interpretations and in places out of date and out of line with normal University policy. The Panel recommends that clearer documentation is developed with regard to assessment regulations as a matter of priority [Recommendation t]. This document should draw together clear statements on the policies and procedures for: marking and moderation (see paragraph 58), external examining, consideration of borderlines, consideration of mitigating circumstances, progression requirements, re-assessment regulations (and implications for final classification), and degree classification methodology.

56 The Panel noted that the methodology for Bachelor’s degree classifications for programmes delivered through the College differs substantially from that in use across other University programmes. For all other University Bachelor’s degrees classification is based on performance in Parts 2 and 3 (240 credits of study), with a 1:2 weighting applied between Part 2 and Part 3. The classification methodology in place for degrees offered by the College relies solely on the last 90 credits of study. The College was unable to offer a specific academic rationale for the current system but attributed it to historic reasons. The Panel recommends that the University and College revisit and seek to more closely align the principles and rationale behind degree classification methodology for both undergraduate and postgraduate awards [Recommendation s].
The Panel noted that students on validated programmes are entitled to three attempts at each module. Whilst this is more than the standard two attempts allowed for students on University delivered programmes, as the College’s current progression from Part 1 to Part 2 and Part 2 to Part 3 require students to pass all modules an additional attempt seems acceptable to ensure students have the greatest opportunity to progress.

The Panel noted that in the previous periodic review a recommendation was made with regard to the College’s moderation policy. It is clear that the College has made progress in this area and provided the Panel with a long document which had been produced on the nature of moderation. Whilst is it is admirable that so much thought has gone into this area, a clear, concise and simple statement as to what moderation takes place for different forms of assessment at different levels is an essential part of the revised ‘Assessment, progression and award Regulations’ or similar.

The College operates a two tier assessment Board structure with results initially considered by Module Boards with recommendations submitted to the Results Board for the course concerned.

The Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) reported that academic misconduct was a particular area of concern particularly in relation to the College’s interpretation of the University’s scale of misconduct and when cases should be referred on to the Faculty for further consideration relating to the seriousness of the offence and the handling of sequential offences. The FDTL has been working with the College to address these issues. The Panel recommends that the College should ensure that the wording of letters to students warning of poor academic practice or applying a penalty for plagiarism is consistent with the University Statement on Academic Misconduct [Recommendation d].

The Panel noted that the College’s Academic Misconduct Policy significantly deviates from the University’s Statement on Academic Misconduct in relation to the definitions of academic misconduct and makes no mention of an indicative scale of offences. Whilst the College may apply its own policy to students on its non-validated programmes, all students on University programmes, and staff involved in assessment, need to be aware of the principles of the University’s Statement on Academic Misconduct. The Panel were particularly concerned that when assignments were submitted to Turnitin they were only flagged for further scrutiny when returning an overall similarity of 25% or higher. The Panel recommends that clearer documentation is developed and the College’s policy brought fully into line with the University’s [Recommendation t].

The Panel found the College’s policy on mitigating circumstances to be clear and in line with University procedures.

Certificates, transcripts and graduation

Students on University validated programmes receive a standard degree certificate and a diploma supplement produced by the College. The Panel noted that an issue for consideration in the transition of CEM to an independent higher education institution was the storage and maintenance of student records in relation to the production of transcripts.

Students are entitled to attend the normal University of Reading graduation and many choose to do so.
Student evaluation and representation

The Panel recognises the wide range of ways the College offers for a student to give feedback on their experience but agreed that the College was too reliant on students raising issues proactively rather than seeking out their views more systematically. Whilst the annual course questionnaire is useful as a general measure the lack of any module level evaluation was out of line with University policy. The Panel recommends that formal opportunities should be in place for students to provide evaluation of their experience at a module level [Recommendation g].

Staffing and staff development

The College employs a relatively small core of full time academic staff with a large pool of Associate Tutors operating on a contract for services basis. The Panel met with a group of Associate Tutors and were impressed with their understanding of the College and its wider operations and their dedication to continuous improvement. The Panel noted as a point of good practice the wide range of support offered by the College for the professional development of its Associate Tutors, with particular reference to the Associate Tutor’s Handbook and Conference [Good practice a]. The Panel recognises that the process of managing a large number of Associate Tutor’s and their workloads is a complex one. The panel noted as a point of good practice the value of a team of committed, professional and flexible Course Administrators and their vital role in managing relationships with associate tutors [Good practice f].

PSRB accreditation

The College’s programmes, including those validated by the University, are recognised by a wide range of professional bodies in the UK and around the world. The Panel recognises the value of professional accreditation in the field and appreciates the sustained efforts of the College to ensure that its programmes meet the requirements of professional bodies as well as the University.

Management and operation of the partnership

Legal context

The original legal agreement establishing the relationship between the University and the College was signed in 1968. It principally deals with the higher level arrangements between the two institutions that were agreed at the time. Unsurprisingly, this agreement no longer adequately reflects the arrangements actually in place between the two institutions.

A separate agreement was signed in 1992 with regard to the continuation of the validation of an External Degree for the BSc in Estate Management. A further separate agreement was signed in 1995 with regard to the validation of the MBA Construction and Real Estate. This agreement has now been terminated and the remaining cohorts are completing their studies.

It is essential that an appropriate legal agreement is put in place between the University and the College. This is a requirement of the UK Quality Code - Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements and of the University’s own procedures for collaborative provision. It is important that this legal agreement captures all aspects of the relationship: operational, quality assurance, financial and also prepares the way for the changing relationship necessitated by the College’s transition to its own degree
awarding powers. The panel recommends that a comprehensive legal agreement be put in place between the University and CEM to ensure alignment with the UK Quality Code - Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements [Recommendation r].

Governance

71 The University has historically been involved at a senior level with the governance arrangements of the College through participation in the Board of Trustees – As required by provisions in the College’s Charter and Bye-Laws, the University was represented (as College Trustees) by the Vice Chancellor (ex-officio), a Pro Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, and two other members staff of the University from within a related subject area. With the move to a fully independent future for the College, University representation was withdrawn from the Board of Trustees. To ensure continued engagement with the College at a senior level during this period of change, a Transition Group has been formed with representation from the University and the College. This group meets on a regular basis to manage the transition process.

72 The Panel were provided with a clear presentation of both the management and academic structures in place within the College. Day to day management is co-ordinated through a group of Directors and ‘Team Leads’ each of whom appear to have clearly defined roles but also work together as an integrated management team.

73 Following a review by the College of academic governance in 2009 the present academic governance arrangements were put in place. Overall responsibility for academic matters is held by the Academic Board with key committees relating to teaching quality and standards being the Quality Enhancement Group (QEG) and the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLAC).

74 Academic management of Programmes and courses is organised through two Boards of Studies covering Undergraduate and Postgraduate studies respectively. The Director of Teaching and Learning for the University’s School of Construction Management and Engineering attends the Boards of Studies (see paragraph 80 below).

Liaison arrangements

75 The College is responsible for all technical, student and administrative support for Programmes validated by the University. It maintains its own student information database and student records.

76 Integration with University processes is achieved through liaison with a number of University contact points:
- The School of Construction Management and Engineering
- The Joint Faculty Office for Science and Life Sciences
- Examinations Office
- Graduation Office
- Quality Support Office

77 And through the transfer of key information:
- Annually updated Programme Specifications
- List of students admitted by the College and updated lists relating to deferral and withdrawal
- Referral of serious cases of Academic Misconduct
- Lists of students eligible to receive an award and attend graduation ceremonies

78 The College is kept up to date with relevant changes in policy and process at the University primarily through regular contact with the Faculty Director of Teaching and
Relationship with School of Construction Management and Engineering

The School of Construction Management and Engineering is the ‘link school’ for the partnership with the College. In practice this is quite a different relationship than between other ‘link schools’ and collaborative providers, with many of the key day to day operations being handled by direct contact between the College and the Faculty Office or other parts of the University.

The School Director of Teaching and Learning is responsible for providing general day to day academic oversight of the validated programmes and does this by attending the College’s Boards of Studies. The SDTL is also the initial point of contact in relation to the quality assurance and approval process for new programmes or amendments to existing programmes.

The School notes that work load in relation to the partnerships is not insignificant, but found it difficult to quantify the staff resource more precisely.

Relationship with Faculty Office

The Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) and Sub-Dean maintain regular contact with the College across a range of areas:

- Creating and maintaining University student records
- Progression, results and withdrawals
- Cases of serious academic misconduct
- Receipt of programme specifications and annual programme reports.

Significant progress has been made in the last two years with the creation of an Operational Handbook jointly between the College and the Faculty Office. This has helped to clarify expectations between the College and the Faculty Office and is noted by the Panel as an excellent development towards documenting and formalising the relationship between the partners.

The FDTL maintains oversight of assessment and examination at the College through attendance at the College Results Boards. This ensures that confidence can be placed in final results when they are confirmed by the Faculty Examiners Meeting.

The FDTL has been working closely with the College with regard to the management of academic misconduct. Cases are now referred directly to the FDTL rather than via the SDTL and work on the College’s application of the University Statement on Academic Misconduct is on-going (see paragraphs 60 and 61 above).

With regard to the maintenance of academic records, the Sub-Dean informed the Panel that a significant project had been undertaken in the summer of 2011 to clean up and bring into alignment the records held by the University and the College. Work in this area is still ongoing and a challenge particularly in respect in expected and actual end dates for students.

Relationship with Student and Academic Services Directorate

As the office responsible for managing collaborative provision across the University, the Quality Support Office is a key point of contact for the College for non-programme related matters. The Director of Academic Quality Services is a member of the Transition Group.
The University Examinations Office is responsible for processing final results and awards and co-ordinates with the Faculty Office and Graduation Office with regard to student eligibility to graduate.

Publicity and marketing
The College is responsible for producing its own publicity and marketing materials covering both its own courses and Programmes validated by the University.

The Panel noted that at present there is no formal process by which the University monitors the accuracy and completeness of information presented by the College relating to validated programmes. The Panel recommends that the University establish a process to monitor the accuracy of publicity and marketing information produced by the College in relation to University validated Programmes [Recommendation u].

The Panel noted that the College’s offering is mentioned in the University’s Undergraduate and Postgraduate prospectuses as part of the University’s offering through partner colleges.

IPR, FOI and Data Protection
Students on University validated programmes are covered by the University’s Code of Practice on Intellectual Property. The Panel noted that at present this is not made clear to students and it would be wise to include this in future editions of the Student Handbook.

Whilst the College is correct in that it is not directly covered by the Freedom of Information Act, it is likely that information relating to students on University validated programmes will be. The University should seek to clarify arrangements and obligations in this area.

As the relationship between the University and College involves the regular exchange of personal data relating to students it is important that any new legal agreement (see paragraph 70) is drafted to include provisions to ensure that both parties are meeting their obligations under relevant legislation.

Conclusions on innovation and good practice
The Panel identifies the following as representing particularly good practice:

a) the wide range of support offered by the College for the professional development of its Associate Tutors, with particular reference to the Associate Tutor’s Handbook and the annual Tutor Conference;

b) the College’s commitment to ongoing innovation in online and distance delivery;

c) the use of the virtual learning environment to facilitate discussion, noted particularly in the teaching of ethics;

d) the group work opportunities that arise as part of the Integrated Management Project (from the BSc in Construction Management course);

e) the icebreaking period which forms part of the MSc Facilities Management;

f) the value of a team of committed, professional and flexible Course Administrators and their vital role in managing relationships with students and associate tutors, as well as providing first line pastoral support;

g) the opportunities the College ensures are in place for Course Administrators to feed into enhancement and development;
Conclusions on quality and standards

The Review Panel has concluded that, whilst bearing in mind recommendation b the intended learning outcomes of the programmes are being obtained by students, the overall the academic standards and quality of both the Undergraduate and the Taught Postgraduate programmes are appropriate and that the programmes are being delivered at the appropriate Level.

Recommendations

With respect to the programmes reviewed

The Panel recommends to the Joint Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning in Science and Life Sciences, that the following programmes that have been reviewed should be re-approved for a further six years:

- BSc Building Surveying
- BSc Estate Management
- BSc Property Management
- BSc Quantity Surveying
- BSc Building Services Quantity Surveying
- BSc Construction Management
- Postgraduate Diploma / MSc Surveying
- MSc Real Estate
- MSc Conservation of the Historic Environment
- MSc Facilities Management
- MSc Property Investment

The University discontinued its validation of the MBA Construction and Real Estate but this review included the programme with regard to currently enrolled students but it has not been validated for further recruitment.

To the College of Estate Management

The review panel considers it necessary that:

a) the number of credits at level 7 in Masters awards be brought into line with University Credit and Qualifications Framework;

b) the College should review the learning outcomes at both a programme and module level in order to appropriately differentiate between UG and PG programmes in line with the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, this is particularly in relation to programmes where a similar module is taught at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels;

c) that the College should ensure that all external examiner reports are kept and that responses are produced for all reports received, and both are appended to annual course reports.

d) that the College should ensure that the wording of letters to students warning of poor academic practice or applying a penalty for plagiarism is consistent with University Statement on Academic Misconduct.
The review panel considers it advisable that:

e) The College take full advantage of the data available on student interaction with the VLE in order to reflect on the effectiveness of the VLE and the material it contains

f) it is made more visible to students and other stakeholders that programmes address key issues in the current business and professional environment like sustainability, corporate social responsibility and health and safety;

g) formal opportunities should be in place for students to provide evaluation of their experience at a module level;

h) the new induction module developed be made a compulsory part of all programmes;

i) the College ensures that the opportunity is taken to internationalise both the curriculum and wider operation of the college as part of the on-going course review process;

j) the opportunities for formative and self-assessment be extended more widely across modules in order to support student learning. This should focus particularly on early undergraduate modules that have higher failure rates;

k) the College continue in its efforts to enhance the quality and timeliness of feedback to students;

l) further easily accessible information be provided to ensure students are given help in accessing the Athens Gateway.

The review panel considers it desirable that:

m) the subject of logistics should be covered within this module Construction Planning, Tendering and Finance module (F311PTF) as part of the BSc Construction Management;

n) in relation to the undergraduate offering, the College is encouraged to look at innovative ways of developing professional and transferable skills in the student body;

o) the College consider offering some hands on support for students in relation to updating career management skills, including guidance on CV presentation, job applications and career change;

p) the College consider the development of an explicitly work based learning module where students would gain credit for experiential and reflective learning gained through their employment

q) greater emphasis be placed on encouraging students to go beyond the material contained within the ‘study binders’ within documentation such as course materials, student handbooks and on the VLE.

To both the University of Reading and the College of Estate Management

The review panel considers it necessary that:

r) a comprehensive legal agreement be put in place between the University and College to ensure alignment with the UK Quality Code - Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements.
The review panel considers it advisable that:

s) the University and College revisit and seek to more closely align the principles and rationale behind degree classification methodology for both undergraduate and postgraduate awards.

t) clearer documentation is developed in a number of areas and where applicable brought fully into line with University templates, specifically with regard to:

- Programme specifications
- Accreditation of prior learning
- Assessment policy and regulations (including internal moderation, consideration of borderline cases, progression requirements, degree classification)
- Academic misconduct policy
- Course approval, review and monitoring
- Student handbooks

To the University of Reading

The review panel considers it advisable that:

u) a process is established to monitor the accuracy of publicity and marketing information produced by the College in relation to University validated Programmes.

v) results of the PTES (Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey) drawn from CEM respondents are routinely circulated to the College and to the School of xxxxxxxx

w) guidance is developed for staff and scrutiny panels involved in new programme approval and modification policies and procedures related to the specific quality and standards issue of distance and blended learning
Annex 1 - Details of meetings held

N.B. Where an individual was present in a number of meetings their name has only been recorded once.

Senior team
Ann Heywood, Principal
Grahame Smith, Finance Director
Mike Kerrison, Director of Education
Ian Selby, Director of Research
Jane Fawkes, Director of Academic Support
Martin Hogan, Director of Knowledge Presentation

Key college teaching and learning staff
Balkees Noor-Mohamed, Dean of Undergraduate Programmes
Sylvia Osborn, Dean of Postgraduate Programmes
Nikki Bulteel, Associate Dean of Teaching, Learning & Assessment Enhancement
Bill McNeill, Reader in Distance Education
Graham Hough, Associate Dean Bachelor Programmes
Gordon Fogg, Associate Dean MSc Programmes
Bekithemba Mpofu, Associate Dean MBA Programme

Academic staff
Henry Russell, Course Leader MSc in Conservation of the Historic Environment
Andrew Green, Course Leader MSc in Facilities Management
John Story, Course Leader MSc in Property Investment
Paul Halford, Course Leader MSc in Surveying
Ewan Craig, Course Leader BSc in Building Surveying
Richard Sykes, Course Leader BSc in Estate Management, BSc in Property Management;
Pauline Makepeace, Tutor in Law
Stephen Bickell, Sustainability Manager
Phil Leverton, Tutor in Planning, Quality Enhancement Manager

Associate tutors
Rebecca Gee
Jane Bell
Nigel Price

Operational staff
Emma Jones, Head of Exams & Progression
Gail Martin, Learning & Academic Support Manager
Carole Fogg, Assignments Officer
Jess Handley, Admissions Officer
Helen Edwards, Accreditation & Partnership Officer
Nicola Sheldon, Special Needs Co-ordinator
Linda Dempsey, Media Services Manager
Course administrators
Gail Martin, Learning & Academic Support Manager
Liz Butler, Course Administrator
Bryony Handley, Course Administrator
Lorna Scott, Course Administrator
Mary Unwin, Course Administrator