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The Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

Overseas Quality Audit Report

University of Bristol and
MusicSpace Italy, Bologna

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Introduction

1 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the Agency) is a UK organisation that seeks to promote public confidence that the quality of provision and standards of awards in higher education (HE) are being safeguarded and enhanced. It provides public information about quality and standards in HE to meet the needs of students, employers and the funders of HE. One of the Agency's activities is to carry out quality audits of collaborative links between UK HE institutions and their partner organisations in other countries. In the spring and early summer of 2003, the Agency audited selected partnership links between UK HE institutions and institutions in Italy. The purpose of the audits was to provide information on the way in which the UK institutions were maintaining academic standards and the quality of education in their partnerships.

The process of audit of overseas partnership links

2 In July 2002, the Agency invited all UK HE institutions to provide information on their collaborative partnerships in a range of overseas countries. Using this information, the Agency approached a number of institutions who had indicated that they had established collaborative links with partner institutions in Italy. Following discussion, a variety of collaborative partnerships was selected for scrutiny. Each of the UK institutions whose collaborative link had been selected for the audit provided a *Commentary* describing the way in which the partnership operated, and discussing the effectiveness of the means by which the UK institution assured quality and standards in the link. In addition, each institution was asked, as part of its *Commentary*, to make reference to the extent to which the link was representative of its procedures and practice in all its overseas collaborative activity, or specific to the partnership being audited. Institutions were also invited, in their *Commentaries*, to make reference to the ways in which their arrangements met the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in HE (Code of practice), Section 2: Collaborative provision* (1999), published by the Agency, which took full effect in August 2000.

3 In the spring of 2003, audit visits were made to each UK institution to discuss its arrangements in the light of the *Commentary*. In May 2003, an audit team visited the partner institutions in Italy to gain further insight into the experience of students and staff, and to supplement the view formed by the team from the institution's *Commentary* and from the UK visit. During the visits to institutions in Italy, further documentation about the partnerships was made available to the team,

and discussions were conducted with key members of staff, lecturers and students. The team for this audit comprised Professor G Chesters, Professor J H Phillips and Dr L H Roberts. The UK and overseas audit exercise was coordinated for the Agency by Dr P J A Findlay and Ms S Patterson, Assistant Directors, Reviews Group. The Agency is particularly grateful to the UK institutions and their partners in Italy for the willing cooperation provided to the team.

4 This report describes the audit of the collaborative link between the University of Bristol (the University), MusicSpace Italy, Bologna (MusicSpace Italy) and the University of Bologna. The audit was conducted on the basis of the visits by the audit team to the University and to MusicSpace Italy, and the scrutiny of documentary evidence made available by those two partners. A series of meetings were held on 25 March 2003 between the audit team and senior staff of the University and this was followed by a visit to MusicSpace Italy on 17 and 18 May 2003, when the team met with the MusicSpace Italy Director, tutors, students, and with an external examiner for the programme.

5 The most recent institutional audit of the University was carried out by the HE Quality Council in 1993. The University's overseas collaborative arrangements have not previously been audited by the Agency.

The background to the collaborative partnership

6 The programme under review in this audit is the three-year, part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Music Therapy, delivered at the MusicSpace Italy centre in Bologna ('the Bologna Diploma programme'). This postgraduate programme of study is owned by the University and is a variant of a Postgraduate Diploma with the same title, which has been delivered in Bristol since 1991 through a collaborative agreement between the University and MusicSpace, Bristol ('the Bristol-based Diploma'). The University of Bologna also has some involvement in the delivery, and the recognition in Italy, of the Bologna Diploma programme. The University stated in its *Commentary* that the collaboration supporting the Diploma in Music Therapy was unique in the University's arrangements because it is a three-way partnership. It is also unique through being the only University award where the delivery and assessment are carried out in a foreign language.

7 The current nature of the collaboration is therefore multidirectional. The University and the University of Bologna belong to the COIMBRA group of universities, an association founded in 1987 to foster special academic and cultural ties; to promote for the benefit of its members internationalisation, academic

collaboration, excellence in learning and research, and service to society; to influence European educational policy; and to develop best practice through the mutual exchange of experience. The University of Bologna has also indicated its academic support for the Bologna Diploma programme through the granting, in October 1994, of a *patrocinio* (see below paragraph 25). In addition, there is a formal agreement between MusicSpace Italy and the Department of Psychology in the University of Bologna (see below, paragraph 28).

8 MusicSpace Italy is a part of an international registered charity, the MusicSpace Trust, which was founded in the UK in 1989 to promote music therapy in clinical practice, training and research. The first MusicSpace centre was opened in Bristol in 1991; there are now six such centres in major UK cities. At the time of the start of the partnership, in 1994, the partner organisation in Italy was known as the Associazione La Musica Interna di Bologna (La Musica Interna), and in 1999 this then became (under the same direction) MusicSpace Italy. MusicSpace Italy is a private teaching organisation affiliated to the MusicSpace Trust, UK. In addition to the Bologna Diploma programme it also offers other courses in music and therapy. It operates from two centres, one in Genoa and the other in Bologna, where the centre occupies private office premises in the city centre. The Bologna Diploma programme commenced in November 1995 (with an intake of 26). A second cohort (23 students) was recruited in 1998 and a third (10 students) in 2001; since that date, recruitment has moved to a yearly cycle, with an annual target of 10. The course is taught through weekend classes held every month, with one longer annual residential session. The day-to-day administration of the programme is undertaken by MusicSpace Italy, and the course is taught by one of the programme's British co-directors (an Honorary Fellow of the University of Bristol who visits Bologna on a monthly basis), together with staff contracted or employed by MusicSpace Italy. There are occasional guest lectures from colleagues from the Department of Psychology (University of Bologna) and elsewhere.

9 The Bristol-based Diploma had its beginnings in the University's Department for Continuing Education. It was formally transferred by an Act of Senate in 1998 to the Faculty of Arts as a consequence of the formal closure of the Department for Continuing Education. The responsibility for the Bologna Diploma programme and its management was transferred alongside the Bristol programme. The audit team heard that formal approval and recommendation of the association with MusicSpace Italy had been delayed as relevant Ordinances were under review. The team also noted that some historical uncertainties regarding the ownership in the University of the Bologna programme were recognised by senior staff. The University will

wish to address the question of the formal association of MusicSpace Italy as a matter of necessity.

The University's approach to overseas collaborative provision

10 The University has collaborative agreements with universities throughout the world. It is a member of the COIMBRA group of 35 European universities, and of the World Universities Network. It has 15 established student exchange links in Italy under the Socrates Erasmus programme. It has nevertheless been cautious in its establishment of collaborative partnerships for the purpose of delivering programmes leading to its awards overseas, and the Bologna Diploma programme is one of only three Bristol award-bearing programmes taught at an overseas institution. The University sees itself as responsible for quality and standards on the Diploma programme in Bologna. This means that in principle the programme falls under the University's normal quality management framework. Under those arrangements, responsibility for quality management is devolved to faculty level, especially to the Faculty Quality Assurance Team (FQAT). This team, with the aid of the University's Teaching Support Unit, manages departmental annual programme review (APR), a monitoring process initiated in 2001-02 which involves scrutiny of student feedback. FQATs receive APR reports and use these and other information as the basis for their visits to departments. The review dealing with the Department of Music's programmes took place in March 2003, with a report expected by the end of April 2003. APR and FQAT reports are part of the documentation considered in the University's internal, five-yearly periodic departmental reviews. These are chaired by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor and with external representation, with reports being passed to the Committee of Deans. The Department of Music was reviewed in this way in December 2002 (see below, paragraph 34).

11 The University's formal arrangements for the management of partnerships, including collaborative provision, are outlined in its Guidelines for Educational Partnerships (the Guidelines). The first version of the Guidelines was published in 1994, and a revised version was developed in October 2002. The introduction to the 1994 Guidelines recognised the growing importance of educational partnerships and argued that 'it is most important therefore that collaborative arrangements are managed effectively at both the course and institutional level and incorporated within mainstream quality assurance procedures through named individuals'. The Guidelines then went on to stress the need for properly agreed financial arrangements, for regular oversight of procedures relating to the operation of partnerships (with an annual report going to the Education Committee), for a

two-stage approval process (relating to institution and programme respectively), for a written agreement between partners, for a management group for each partnership and for a decision on which university Ordinance would cover the partnership. Some outline advice was included on the format for submissions and subsequent agreements.

12 The revised 2002 Guidelines cover all the above points with greater clarity and rigour, building on the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision*, where appropriate. The revised publication also adds some emphasis, particularly regarding review processes, on the University's responsibility for the issue of award certificates and transcripts, and concerning its control over the accuracy of all public information, publicity and promotional activity. It includes a template for an Institutional Agreement for an 'Educational Partnership between the University of Bristol and the University of X'. At the time of the visit, it was not clear whether this template would apply to partnerships with institutions that were not universities. However, the audit team was told that the new 2002 Guidelines document had not yet (in March 2003) been approved by Senate because some of the University's Ordinances needed to be rewritten first; the draft was expected to return to the University's Education Committee before the end of the academic year, 2002-03.

13 The audit team sought to determine how the policies and procedures recommended in the 1994 Guidelines had been applied in the case of the collaborative partnership centring on the Bologna Diploma programme but, as outlined elsewhere in this report, it was unable to identify any substantial evidence pointing to the effective operation of the procedures as laid down in the Guidelines. The University suggested that this was because the link had historically preceded the development of formal guidelines. In considering this point, the team noted that the approval of the first version of the Guidelines took place in November 1994 after the initiation of the Bologna link but a year before the first intake to the Diploma delivered in Bologna. This begged the question as to why the 1994 Guidelines were not immediately applied to a course which was launched in November 1995. Furthermore, the evidence available to the team suggested that, after a period of over seven years, there were grounds for doubt whether the 1994 Guidelines had ever been applied to the approval and subsequent operation of the Diploma programme in Bologna.

14 In its *Commentary*, the University also pointed to the important quality assurance role of the Programme Director for the Diploma in Music Therapy delivered at Bristol. The University provides guidance on the role of the programme director, which identifies, among other tasks, responsibility for the monitoring of the

programme. In the case of the Bologna programme, this member of staff had provided substantial support for the Bologna programme, acting as an internal examiner and being in a position to monitor the quality and comparability of the programmes as taught in both venues (see also paragraphs 33 and 34 below). The audit team saw documents, in part prepared specifically for the audit, which provided evidence that such responsibilities were being carried out. As far as the team could ascertain, however, there was no standard, formally established University procedure for reporting on the programme.

15 Overall, the audit team found that, despite the existence of the 1994 Guidelines, and the subsequent operation of the University's more general quality assurance procedures, there was very little evidence available relating to the Bologna Diploma programme which suggested that such procedures, or those provided in the revised draft 2002 Guidelines, had been communicated or applied in an effective manner. While the University circulated the 1994 Guidelines to all departments following their approval by Senate in June 1994, the University's deferral in approving the amendments to its Guidelines had delayed the promulgation of good practice in such collaborative arrangements. It was not clear to the team that the staff carrying responsibilities in the context of the Bologna programme had been made sufficiently aware of such good practice. The University will wish to implement procedures that avoid such delay in the approval of policy, and take measures to secure more effective communication.

The Code of practice

16 The University has considered a number of sections of the *Code of practice*, using them to inform various sets of guidelines, for example, external examining, student feedback, assessment, personal tutors. The Learning and Teaching Group, a subcommittee of Education Committee is charged with analysing progress. It had considered the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision* in March and October 2002, a process that resulted in the revisions to the Guidelines noted above (paragraph 12).

17 Considering the progress towards adherence to the precepts relating to collaborative provision, the audit team found that there was little evidence of it having been taken into account in the context of the partnership under review. Thus, for instance, the team could find no evidence that the collaborative arrangements were negotiated, agreed and managed in accordance with the University's formally stated policies and procedures governing such partnerships (see paragraphs 11-15 above). There was no explicit statement of the University's responsibility for quality

and standards in any formal partnership document relating to the collaboration. Although the Vice-Chancellor had indicated his support in principle for the partnership (see paragraphs 25-30 below), there was no legally binding agreement or contract signed by the heads of institutions. Therefore, a number of the more detailed matters that the *Code of practice* recommends should be addressed in such an agreement remained unspecified: the arrangements for monitoring and review were unclear (see paragraphs 34 and 35 below): the procedures for the monitoring of publicity were not clearly determined: the appointment of one of the external examiners breached the normal procedures for determining the suitability of an external examiner (see paragraph 48 below); and the award certification was not in accordance with the *Code of practice* (see paragraph 31 below).

18 The Diploma programme places considerable emphasis on the quality of placement experience in music therapy practice. The audit team heard that 'the University believes it is broadly compliant' with the *Code of practice, Section 9: Placement learning*, although the team saw no evidence that there had been formal consideration of this section of the *Code of practice*. Placement learning is seen by the University as mainly applicable in faculties with vocational courses such as engineering and it was argued that placement learning was in general covered by the codes of Professional and Statutory Bodies (PSBs) and would be monitored by the relevant professional bodies. In the case of the Diploma in Music Therapy, the Dean of Arts expressed the view that issues surrounding placement of students would have been covered in the review conducted by the British Art Therapists Board (BATB, now under the auspices of the Health Professions Council). While the documentation of the BATB visits showed that the issue was indeed considered, that review touched only on the UK arrangements relating to the home-based course in Bristol. There appeared to have been no such overview of the Bologna-based arrangements for placements, nor any University policy in place that would serve to guide such arrangements nor any mention of responsibility for placements in the agreement between the Department of Music in Bristol and MusicSpace Italy. It was not possible for the team to conclude that the University was seeking to adhere to the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Placement learning* in the context of this partnership.

19 Although the University's 1994 Guidelines represented a valuable early initiative in codifying the University's approach to partnerships, their further revision was necessary in order to take fully into account the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 2; Collaborative provision*, published in 1999. The audit team noted that adherence to that *Code of practice* was generally expected to be demonstrable by institutions by Autumn 2000. However, the team heard that formal

consideration of the *Code of practice* by the University had only begun in 2002, and the process of revising the Guidelines in the light of the *Code of practice* was not yet completed at the time of the audit. The Director of the University's Teaching Support Unit acknowledged that, although review of practice in the light of the *Code of practice* was under way, embedding practice in departments was proving to be a slow process. The point was made that such a gradualist approach was conducive to gaining a higher level of ownership. Nevertheless, on the basis of the evidence available for this partnership, the team found that the timing of the University's consideration of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision* was unduly delayed, and its adherence to the precepts of the *Code* was therefore deficient.

The establishment and management of the collaborative partnership

The approval process

20 The first initiatives to establish the collaborative partnership formally began in 1993. The founder (in 1989) and current Director of the MusicSpace Trust in Bristol is an honorary research fellow of the University and holds a personal chair at the University of the West of England, Bristol. He is President of the MusicSpace Trust and has had a key role in developing music therapy internationally as an academic discipline and a professional practice. It was his connections that led to the agreement with La Musica Interna in Bologna. At that time, the University already had recognised links with the University of Bologna but not with La Musica Interna. The University had determined that there was sufficient level of support in Bologna, both academic and administrative, to make the links firmer and thereby to provide the first opportunity for Italian students to apply for a university-based music therapy training programme.

21 In January 1994, the Director of the MusicSpace Trust in Bristol prepared a briefing document on the proposed Bologna project, the main thrust of which was supported in a communication in May 1994 from the then Head of the Department for Continuing Education to the Vice-Chancellor. The main factor in acceptance of the programme was the assurance from the Director and the Head of Continuing Education that the Bristol programme could be delivered in Italy. The Vice-Chancellor also supported the proposal and wrote to the Rector of the University of Bologna supporting the delivery of the programme in Bologna. The University conducted no formal validation process, either of the slightly modified programme or of the partner institutions. Although evidence was seen of academic planning, including consideration of the

suitability of teaching and accommodation resources, and financial viability, the audit team saw no formal consideration of the details of the partnership in any other way. There was no visit to Bologna by any approval panel, nor any participation of expert peers external to the University. The programme, being located at that time in the Department for Continuing Education, was never subject to Faculty scrutiny. Thus the initial approval processes carried out prior to the commencement of the programme did not follow the recommendations of the University's 1994 Guidelines, which could have provided assurance that the procedures conformed to accepted practice in the UK HE system at the time.

Professional accreditation and recognition

22 The Bristol-based Diploma has received external accreditation by the BATB. This was based on an accreditation visit to Bristol in December 2000 with a follow-up visit in November 2001. The report produced by the accreditation process prompted a detailed University response to the 2001 BATB report. All the suggestions made by the Board were subsequently incorporated into the student handbook for the Bristol course but these modifications did not appear to have yet been incorporated into the handbook used in Bologna. In discussions with the audit team, the University put the case that the BATB accreditation applied equally to the Bologna course, since they are more or less identical. The team noted, however, that the BATB accreditation, while its purpose was 'to approve the University to offer a Diploma in Music Therapy', in fact dealt exclusively with the provision of the Bristol-based Diploma, and made no reference to the Bologna Diploma programme. The team believed that it would, therefore, not, be appropriate for the University, as was perhaps implied by a full description in the *Commentary* of the BATB process, to assume that the UK accreditation would provide it with assurance relating to the overseas collaborative partnership version of the programme. The team also noted that the Department of Music was investigating whether the accreditation extended to the Bologna programme, but thought it unlikely that there would be a positive response.

23 The *Commentary* stated that the Bologna programme is accredited by the Confederation of Italian Music Therapists and the Italian Professional Association. Staff involved in the programme in Bologna acknowledged that the nature of the Italian accreditation is not comparable to that of accreditation by a PSB in the UK. One of the primary corporate aims of MusicSpace Italy, the Confederation of Italian Music Therapists and the Italian Professional Association is to gain official governmental recognition, so that formal professional accreditation can take place in Italy.

The collaborative agreements

24 In its *Commentary*, the University described the 'three-way' agreement for the partnership. This was based, according to the University, firstly on a university-level agreement between the University and the University of Bologna, secondly, on an agreement between the University of Bologna and La Musica Interna, and thirdly on that between the University's Department of Music and La Musica Interna. The University also referred to an agreement between the Bristol Department of Music and the Department of Psychology at the University of Bologna. However, on the basis of the documentation made available, the audit team was not able to identify a pattern of formal written agreement which would allow the University to secure its interests and define its responsibilities.

25 The audit team found that beyond the exchange of correspondence between Vice-Chancellors (see paragraph 21 above), there was no formal agreement at an institutional level between the two universities regarding the Diploma programme. From the University's statements in the *Commentary*, it appeared to the team that one reason for this situation was that an inappropriate interpretation might have been placed on the University of Bologna's bestowing of the *patrocinio*. The *Commentary* stated that the conferment of the *patrocinio* was equivalent to an institution-level agreement. The team was not convinced that this recognition implied any of the processes normally associated with academic approval or inter-institutional agreement. The *patrocinio* was initiated by the UK Director of MusicSpace (at that time a Research Fellow in the University), and was subsequently requested by La Musica Interna for the delivery of the Bristol programme. It had a significant role in establishing the status of the programme in the Italian context indicating, as it did, academic and moral support from such a highly respected institution as the University of Bologna. But since the conferment of the *patrocinio* related to the programme as delivered at La Musica Interna, and was addressed to that organisation, it was difficult for the team to agree that it constituted an agreement with the University. In any case, it was evident that the brief exchange of correspondence relating to the *patrocinio* would not of itself suffice to meet the requirements of the University's own 1994 Guidelines relating to such agreements.

26 With regard to inter-departmental agreements, the University provided for the audit team a 1995 draft document that was intended to be a step towards a formal agreement between the Department for Continuing Education at the University, which was at that time the home department of the Bristol-based Diploma in Music Therapy, and La Musica Interna in Bologna. However, the team found that this draft was

not in accordance with the outline content for such agreements recommended in the University's 1994 Guidelines. Furthermore, the University was not able to provide the team with a document drawn up before November 1998 that had been signed by both parties. A signed agreement was therefore in place only three years after the start of the partnership, coinciding with the recruitment of a second cohort of students. It was apparently the case that the students of the first intake to the Bologna Diploma programme had been following a course that was not covered by any form of signed agreement between the University and its 'agent' in Bologna, nor one between the University and the University of Bologna.

27 In considering the agreement, which was finally signed in 1998, the audit team found that this had not been signed by the Vice-Chancellor of the University, did not address the division of responsibility for the quality of the curriculum and teaching, and contained no mention of learning support, student support, staff development, educational guidance facilities, quality management procedures or arrangements for review. The team also considered the updated version of this agreement between the Department of Music at the University and MusicSpace Italy (dated July 2001) and found that it required the latter to 'act as the agent of the Department', and is renewed with respect to each new cohort. With respect to MusicSpace Italy, the clauses of the agreement relate solely to those expected of an agency: publicity, recruitment, interviews, collection of student fees, payment of staff (remuneration and expenses), and purchase of instruments. Given that the Director of MusicSpace Italy is a designated Programme Director for the course and staff of MusicSpace Italy are closely involved in the teaching of the programme, the team considered that it would be inappropriate to see the role of MusicSpace as solely comparable to that of an agent who brokers or facilitates collaborative arrangements (as defined in the *Code of practice*). MusicSpace Italy acts more like a collaborative partner than an agent in the above sense. The team acknowledged the care taken by the University in ensuring that the agreement is produced and signed afresh for each new intake. But given the actual character of the partnership, the team believed that the current formulation of the agreement was inadequate to secure, as robustly as an institutional agreement should do, all aspects of quality assurance.

28 A further aspect of the agreements relating to the programme is the relationship between MusicSpace Italy and the Department of Psychology, University of Bologna. Currently, there is an agreement between the two organisations under which the Department agrees to provide academic advice and collaboration to the Diploma programme, including teaching, thesis supervision, participation in evaluation of the course,

and research cooperation. This is a formal contract between MusicSpace Italy (Bologna) and the University of Bologna, based on an agreement (*convenzione*) signed by the President of MusicSpace Italy and the Director of the Department of Psychology at the University of Bologna. However, there is no evidence that the University is a formal party to this agreement. It is, therefore, not easy to concur with the view expressed in the University's *Commentary* that 'the agreement between the Bristol Department of Music and the Department of Psychology (Bologna) is a working academic collaboration' since the signed agreement between the two Italian educational institutions does not mention the Bristol Department of Music, and such a collaboration was not demonstrated in any documentation or discussion during the audit.

29 In March 2002, the Arts Faculty Graduate Studies Committee considered a completed 'Proposal Form for Major Changes to Current Programmes' which proposed an 'associated status' for the University of Bologna and for MusicSpace Italy, together with proposals for a substantially revised agreement. However, the proposal was not accepted, pending a review of the relevant ordinances. The University provided for the audit team an early draft of the new Institutional Agreement which was intended to capture the arrangements underpinning an Educational Partnership between the University and the University of Bologna, including arrangements relating to MusicSpace Italy. There was, however, no evidence that this had yet been shared with the University of Bologna. Furthermore, it became clear to the team during its visit to Bologna that MusicSpace Italy operated, in terms of its location and legal status, quite separately from the University of Bologna, and its Directors did not consider that it had a role in defining the nature of the relationship between the two Universities. In taking forward any revised agreement, the University will wish to ensure that all parties are fully apprised of the proposals.

30 To summarise, the audit team found that the position regarding the written collaborative agreement was not fully consistent with its understanding of the *Commentary*. There was no evidence that a formally established three-way agreement was currently the basis for the partnership. The only documented partnership agreement in place was that between MusicSpace Italy and the home department in the University. That agreement itself was found to be inappropriately delayed in its initial signing, and insufficient for the required purpose. The University accepted that the written agreements covering the multidirectional nature of the partnership were in need of serious revision and that, currently, the University was neither adhering to the *Code of practice* nor to its own Guidelines. It agreed that this situation meant that

the University would be exposed should there be difficulties with the partnership but that in practice it was not vulnerable, believing that the arrangements for the Bologna delivery of the Diploma programme were robust. The audit team took the view that in order to protect the interests of all the parties involved in the collaborative partnership, and in particular those of the students, it was essential that the University put in place, as a matter of urgency, a fully specified written agreement in accordance with its own regulations and with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*.

Certificates and transcripts

31 The issuing of the award certificate for the Diploma remains under the control of the University. The audit team saw a copy of the certificate currently awarded on completion of the Diploma programme. This was identical to that of the Bristol-based Diploma, apart from the addition of the words 'Sede Italiana: Bologna' (literally 'located in Bologna, Italy'). It included no reference to the University of Bologna, nor to MusicSpace. The certificate contained no reference to the fact that the language of both instruction and assessment is Italian. The University accepted that there was lack of adherence to the relevant precept in the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision*, and confirmed that it would wish to modify the form of words on the certificate accordingly.

Publicity and marketing materials

32 The *Commentary* indicated the University's belief that responsibility for marketing and publicising the Diploma programme in Bologna resided with the Department of Music, which should collaborate with MusicSpace Italy in the production of web site information, programme materials and handbooks. It was understood at university level that such materials were provided by the Department of Music and were simply translated by MusicSpace in Bologna. However, the audit team heard that the view of the Department of Music was that, although this was the original arrangement, marketing and advertising were now entirely a local responsibility of MusicSpace Italy. Although the current Head of Department of Music expressed some disquiet about the arrangements, the signed agreement between that Department and MusicSpace Italy placed responsibility on MusicSpace for publicising the course. It was clear to the team that there was no central institutional mechanism in the University for monitoring such publicity, and that the location of such responsibility at the Departmental level was unclear. Given the evident confusion, it was not possible to see how the University could claim that it has effective control over the accuracy of all public information, publicity and promotional activity relating to the programme; there was no evidence of adherence

to the relevant precept in the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision*.

Quality of learning opportunities and student support

Management and communications

33 The main management link between the University and MusicSpace was provided through the three Programme Directors. The management of the overall Diploma programme within the Department of Music was allocated to a full-time academic who was also one of the three Programme Directors and an internal examiner in Bologna in music improvisation. He was also the main Bristol-based contact for the other two Programme Directors. These were the Director of MusicSpace Italy, and the Honorary Fellow of the University who initiated the whole partnership. The latter participated in the teaching of the Bologna programme through a monthly visit. The former visited Bristol periodically. Email exchange was frequent between all three Programme Directors. Day-to-day management of the programme and student support was in the hands of the Bologna-based Programme Director who, with two other staff, also gave tutorials and undertook supervision work. Some administrative support was provided as required from within the Department of Music to deal with student records, assessment results and fees. However, the audit team found that there was no formal management group in place for the partnership which might correspond to the arrangements stipulated in the University's 1994 Guidelines. Although conducted on a relatively informal basis, the communication, liaison and administrative aspects of the Diploma programme appeared to the team to be generally well-managed. Nevertheless, the ongoing support for the programme, and the direct involvement of the University were both highly dependent on the contribution of key individuals, and the team were unable to identify any provision for succession planning which might safeguard continuity in the University's support for students.

Programme monitoring and review

34 The Bristol-based Programme Director performed a moderating and evaluative role, providing reflective reports on the music teaching experience in Italy. However, this appeared to be an individual initiative, and the audit team was unable to find a formal definition of such a role and its responsibilities in the context of collaborative partnerships. There also appeared to be no provision for any formal institutional report or other formal reporting mechanism that had been followed, and no such reports were available to the team. The University agreed with the team that review of this

programme should, in principle, be captured in any review of the Department of Music, including APR. The team was told that the collaborative provision with Bologna had been considered as part of the departmental review of the Department of Music which took place in 2002, with a report feeding in through the FQAT of the Faculty of Arts to the Committee of Deans. However, the report of the periodic review stated only that: 'the Panel felt the arrangements for the part time Postgraduate Diploma in Music Therapy programme in conjunction with MusicSpace were satisfactory but asked the department to work with the University to ensure that regular review takes place'. It is not clear from the wording whether this recommendation was also prompted through a consideration of the Bologna programme as well as the Bristol-based programme. The implication is that regular review had not taken place of either the Bristol or the Bologna programme, and this was supported by the evidence available to the team. Proposals from the Department of Music to rectify this position were imminent at the time of the audit. The team noted that collaborative provision was not specifically mentioned in the University's guidelines for departmental review processes; the University might wish to specify the inclusion of such practice in these guidelines.

35 The need for a periodic review of partnerships was recognised in the 1994 and 2002 Guidelines; but the audit team did not see any outline of how such reviews might be undertaken or communicated within the University. The team was unable to judge the effectiveness of any procedures that might exist, since no systematic review of the partnership had been undertaken, even though there had now been two complete graduating cohorts, over a period of seven years. Despite the lack of any regular formal review, the team acknowledged the strength of the informal links between the Programme Directors and between the administrative colleagues in Bristol and Bologna, and the value of the evaluative reports that had been generated by the Programme Directors. It was clear, however, that the University itself had no reporting mechanism for knowing that such good practice existed.

Student information and support

36 While there was a comprehensive and informative student handbook provided for the Bristol Diploma students, the information for the students following the Bologna Diploma programme seemed to the audit team to be less comprehensive, although it clearly covered most essential points. The team was told that a new student handbook in Italian is in the course of preparation in Bologna. Had the University's monitoring and review procedures been applied, this lack might well have been noted and rectified earlier. There was no information either in the Bristol student handbook or in the Bologna student notes about the

handling of complaints or appeals, and the University will wish to rectify this omission. There are potential opportunities for closer links between students studying the Diploma programme at the different centres, and students whom the team met in Bologna expressed a wish to have closer contact with their peers on the Bristol course.

37 The students benefited from allocated individual personal tutors (either the Bologna Programme Director or senior colleagues), with tutorials taking place each month; they were also supported in their personal development through the 'closure groups' (see paragraph 40 below) which followed each weekend's tuition. Overall pastoral responsibility rested with the Programme Director who is an Honorary Fellow of the Bristol Department of Music; he personally reviewed each student's progress every year and had frequent interaction with the students, all of whom expressed appreciation of his guidance. The Bristol-based Programme Director also discussed work with individual students during the course of his annual visit. Ongoing course records were transferred from Bologna and were kept in Bristol.

38 Placements and their supervision formed a crucial feature of the Diploma delivery in Bristol and efforts had been made to replicate the process in Italy in spite of the lack of qualified music therapists in that country. Those students who could not be placed with music therapists had been given additional supervision during the weekend courses. The audit team was told that changing to an annual intake of fewer students should make it easier to find appropriate supervised placements in future. The placement programme in Italy appeared to be carefully managed, thanks to the extensive personal contacts of two of the Programme Directors with Italians working in the music therapy and allied fields. Given the lack of a placement policy at University level, it is less straightforward than it might be to draw comparisons between the two placement programmes (see paragraph 18 above).

39 All the evidence seen by the audit team supported the confidence expressed by the Department of Music at Bristol in the capacity of MusicSpace Italy to manage the programme on its behalf, and to provide good quality student support.

Feedback from students

40 Student feedback depended almost exclusively on a mechanism established by MusicSpace Italy. The Italian students met with a facilitator (a trained psychologist) for group supervisions ('closure groups') at the end of each teaching weekend. The students explained to the audit team how these supervisions allowed them to express any anxieties about the course;

the facilitator explained how she was able, with the students' permission, to distinguish between personal issues and issues that needed to be raised with the programme directors. Twice each year a specific meeting was set aside for student feedback. The facilitator presented student issues to the Bologna-based team in the absence of the students, and subsequently prepared a 'Question and Answer' sheet (in Italian). Issues were communicated to the other two UK-based Programme Directors if they were deemed to be serious. Current year one students also appreciated the operation of an email mechanism whereby each student was asked to reflect on imminent weekend sessions and submit these reflections to the programme team.

41 The audit team acknowledged the value of student feedback systems that go beyond paper-based questionnaires and accepted in this case the sympathetic relationship between the nature of the course and the feedback system in operation. But, on its own, the process was open to question as to whether it was sufficiently systematic, rigorous and transparent. While it provided for local quality-related information, there was no channel established through which the Department of Music or the University quality assurance system would be able to receive any direct feedback on the student experience of the Bologna Diploma programme. The University may wish to consider how it can align the innovative approach adopted by this programme with its mainstream feedback systems, in a way that is sensitive to the innovation and to the University's need to have confidence in robust student feedback.

Staffing and staff development

42 Locally, the staffing in Bologna consists of a Programme Director, tutors, lecturers, visiting therapists, external experts, placement supervisors and clerical support. Key staff had all taken the music therapy diploma themselves, so did not need formal induction to the requirements of the course; the key staff undertake the induction of other staff. The audit team heard that curricula vitae (CVs) of staff teaching on the Bologna programme were scrutinised by the Department of Music and the Faculty of Arts. These CVs were made available to the team on its visit to the University, but there was no documentation to record any scrutiny or to show that they had been approved. With the exception of the Bologna Programme Director, there was no indication that the teaching staff were given honorary status with the University as a matter of course. Although there was no evidence of formal or systematic staff development, the close liaison and shared teaching within the programme clearly offered opportunities for relevant advice and support on a continuing basis.

The assurance of the standards of awards

Admissions

43 MusicSpace Italy administers the admissions process. Selection is by interview and examination, but the Department of Music in Bristol retains the right to make the final decision on admission. For the latest cohort, there were approximately two applications for each place to study on the Bologna Diploma programme. The students were appreciative of the seriousness with which admission was treated and fully understood the overarching authority of the University in this matter. The Bristol-based Programme Director writes to each student upon admission; there appeared to be some delay experienced by the most recent cohort (March 2003) in receiving the university-level documentation. Induction to the course was given by MusicSpace Italy staff and was well received. In general, the audit team was satisfied that admissions standards were established and due procedures followed.

Language of instruction

44 The language of the delivery and assessment of the programme is Italian. The audit team was told that the University's policy on language of delivery and assessment was under development. In practice, all three Programme Directors have either native Italian, near native Italian or reasonable competence. The University had also been able to appoint an external examiner with both the relevant subject expertise and competence in Italian. Where there were deficiencies such as in highly technical language, Italian colleagues provide immediate assistance. It was acknowledged that translators would have to be employed if necessary, for example, for monitoring student assessments. Access to the latter (whether coursework, examination papers or recordings of performance) is unproblematic whether for external examiners or the Bristol-based internal examiner. Student feedback and the ongoing monitoring of the course were not translated, however, and were not transmitted to the home department. Nor was there systematic translation into Italian of key University documents. While the current staff and the UK external examiner clearly had the capacity to resolve language-related issues in key areas, the University as yet had no recourse to any formal policy or procedures to address this significant aspect of the programme. The lack of a well-defined policy in this area meant that the University was dependent on the specific competences of individuals supporting the programme; there was no general provision to address a situation where such individuals were no longer able to be involved. There were therefore potential risks associated with the lack of any systematic approach to succession planning. The University will wish to review the implications of delivery and assessment in a foreign language, to

formulate a policy regarding the formal requirement for language competency on the part of those directly involved with the Bologna Diploma, and to monitor its implementation in this programme.

Assessment

45 Staff in Italy undertake assessment of the students, and examinations (in first and second years) are presided over by a commission of internal examiners with the Bristol-based Programme Director involved in the second-year process. It was not clear by what authority the Bologna-based staff act as examiners since the University's Faculty of Arts had not formally appointed them as internal examiners nor notified their names to Senate, as required by University procedure. This seemed to be an oversight with regard to the Bologna teachers.

46 Examination Boards meet in Bologna, with the participation of the Bristol Programme Director, and the minutes are sent to the Programme Director in the Department of Music. There have been two complete cohorts with satisfactory completion rates; extensions have been allowed for some students to complete placements and case-studies. Students are informed of their results through the Bristol Programme Director. Successful candidates are given the opportunity (taken by some) to attend an award ceremony in Bristol; an informal ceremony takes place in Bologna.

External examiners

47 The Commentary made no mention of the role of external examiners in the assurance of quality and the maintenance of standards. The audit team had access to a set of external examiners' reports submitted to the University, but no responses to external examiners' reports were made available, nor any evidence of their formal consideration. Colleagues from MusicSpace Italy had no recollection of ever seeing an external examiner's report on the Bologna programme. The team concluded that the use of external examiners' reports in the context of the Bologna Diploma was deficient.

48 Of the two current external examiners, one is a native Italian and the other (an English speaker) is a graduate in Italian with subject expertise in music therapy. Such a relatively small cohort of students might not ordinarily require two external examiners, but the audit team readily accepted the good practice of gathering together a broader mix of skills and experience (in this case, familiarity with Italian HE and a knowledge of UK academic standards). However, the team noted that the Italian external examiner was a member of staff of the University of Bologna. It found a surprising inconsistency in the University's position, in that it stated in the *Commentary* that the University of

Bologna was one of the partners in this link and yet had appointed a Professor from that same University as an external examiner. This external examiner also made a contribution to the delivery of the programme. The team viewed this irregularity as a serious procedural breach by the University of the section of the *Code of practice, Section 4: External Examining* (with no impropriety attaching at all to the examiner in question). With regard to the support provided by the external examiners for the examination of assessment conducted in Italian, the University may wish to consider the need for formal arrangements to secure such expertise on a continuing basis (see paragraph 44 above).

49 Taken together, the available reports of the external examiners for the two cohorts that had graduated provided broad evidence of comparability of standards, and support for the development of the course. This developmental aspect is given further weight in the immediate aftermath of award decisions when there is in-depth discussion between the external examiners, Programme Directors and others involved in the delivery of the course. In other respects (appointment, contract, payment, briefing documentation, appropriateness of skills and experience, participation in the examination process, approval of pass lists), the use of the external examiner system to assure standards is satisfactory. The audit team noted, however, that the two external examiners had apparently served for a period longer than that indicated as appropriate in the University's regulations. This, together with the confusion over externality in the case of a collaborative partner and the absence of any detailed written engagement with the examiners' reports suggest that there is considerable scope for improvement in securing the full benefits of the system for securing standards.

Comparability of standards

50 The *Commentary* stated that both of the UK-based Programme Directors had very close links with both the Bristol and the Bologna Music Therapy programmes and that this contributed to the comparability of both programmes, providing a cross-check on standards and practice. There was ample evidence that this was indeed the case, and in particular the Bristol-based Programme Director was in a position to make direct comparisons of standards across the Bristol and Bologna programmes, both from a course leadership perspective and as an internal examiner. The *Commentary* included, for the purposes of the audit, tables of comparative information on the Diploma, as taught in Bristol and Bologna, and the audit team found these to be informative and illuminating. However, although these informal and personal contributions to comparison and comparability were clearly of value, the team was unable to identify any way in which comparison of

standards was carried out in a more formal manner, and was not clear to what extent the comparative information provided had been previously considered by the University. Although student data on progression and achievement were made available to the team, there was no evidence that any analysis of such data had informed any internal report. The team also noted that there is deliberate policy of keeping the external examiners completely separate for the two Diploma programmes in Bristol and Bologna; the team was unable to discern any principled reason why this should be so and saw good reasons why it should not be so, in order to establish comparability. As far as the team was able to judge, no comparison is made by the University (in any formal forum) of the experience or achievement in the two centres.

51 The Commentary stated that international collaboration including programmes such as the Bologna Diploma is seen by the University as being in a broad sense 'an essential feature of the benchmarking process that enables [the University] to maintain and enhance [its] international standing'. The audit team understood this to mean that the University was committed to a comparison between the quality and standards of its own internal provision and that of its international partners. Such a comparison might have been made between the University's delivery of the Diploma programme in Bristol and that of its delivery in Bologna, or between the Diploma programme and other programmes at the same level delivered in Italian universities. However, the team could find no evidence that such comparisons were being made or taken into consideration. The minimal level of information received in the committees of the University about the programme and its delivery meant that it had not been in a position to know whether its programme in Bologna did or did not add to its capacity to benchmark its standing.

Conclusions

52 The collaborative partnership between the University (the University), the University of Bologna and MusicSpace Italy, Bologna (MusicSpace Italy) is based on the award by the University of a Postgraduate Diploma in Music Therapy to students successfully completing a Diploma programme delivered at MusicSpace. The partnership was initiated in 1994 and at the time of the audit visit there were 11 registered students following the Diploma programme.

53 The University provided a Commentary that gave an account of the partnership which, while providing indicative descriptive information in some respects, was in parts inaccurate or incomplete, and failed to engage with the manifest weaknesses in the quality assurance

of the partnership. The Commentary, together with the supporting documentation provided by the University and discussions with staff and students in Bristol and Bologna, formed the evidence on which the audit was based. The University regarded this partnership link as exceptional as it was based on what the University viewed as a three-way relationship. It was also one of only three overseas collaborative programmes leading to an award of the University.

54 The audit found that the commitment and expertise of those directly involved in delivering and assessing the course whether in the Department of Music or in MusicSpace Italy had ensured that in practice the Diploma programme had been well received by students, and that the quality of provision was high. The enthusiasm of staff had clearly transmitted itself to the small cohort of students following the programme and this no doubt partly explains the positive success rate of the course. The programme was strongly appreciated by students for the valuable opportunity it offered them in Italy to pursue a qualification in a developing professional area.

55 During the period of the audit the University visited the partner institution and reviewed the partnership. Documentation presented by the University subsequent to the audit, suggested that the need for rapid action in a number of areas was well understood and that the University was giving urgent attention to its procedures.

56 Notwithstanding these positive features, the evidence of the audit suggests that there are grounds for concern regarding the University's assurance of quality and standards for the Bologna Diploma programme. In the areas considered in the audit of its procedures, action by the University was found to be lacking or deficient. This was the case with regard to significant aspects of the quality assurance of the collaborative partnership, including: the formal approval of the partnership; the establishment of a formal partnership agreement; the monitoring and review of the partnership; the award certification; and the management of publicity. The weakness of the contractual agreement, and a reliance on key individual members of university staff had increased possible risks associated with a lack of succession planning. More generally the university had done little to secure the appropriate management of information which might provide it with a proper overview of the partnership. It had failed to ensure that, in the context of this programme, its own published Guidelines had been followed in a timely and responsive manner. The University's quality assurance systems, as exemplified in this audit, would be unlikely to have identified rapidly any serious problems or student concerns relating to the award for which it has the final authority.

57 The audit found evidence to suggest that the way in which this collaborative partnership had been overlooked was symptomatic of a more general complacency with regard to the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision* and to the full management responsibilities relating to educational partnerships. That this was the case was suggested by the fact that, although the *Code of practice* was published in July 1999 and the expectation was that all institutions should be able to demonstrate that they were adhering to the precepts by autumn 2000, the University did not consider revisions to its procedures in light of the *Code of practice* until February 2002, and at the time of the audit had still not approved a new version of its internal Guidelines. As a consequence, the University was unable to demonstrate that it had given appropriate attention, in the context of this partnership, to many of the precepts of the *Code of practice* relating to collaborative provision.

58 The University should now ensure that it makes progress in addressing a number of key issues. It is advised to confirm formally the location, ownership, and responsibility for the programme within the University. It should clarify the precise nature of the collaborative partnership agreement, and in revising the agreement specify clearly the nature of the role and responsibilities of the different partners in respect of this programme. It should confirm the approval, as a matter of urgency, of its revised Guidelines, should be satisfied that these take into account the precepts of the *Code of practice*, and that it can have full confidence in their implementation and operation. Such measures will address many of the detailed omissions uncovered in the audit. The University is also advised to include a thorough consideration of the management of collaborative provision as a required element in departmental review. It should identify clearly and formally the responsibilities within the University for the regular monitoring of collaborative provision, and ensure that it receives regular reports on such provision as a formal item within its more general monitoring and review procedures.

59 The University is committed to taking action to address the serious concerns raised in this report, and is encouraged to reflect in its action plan on its approach to collaborative partnership. Until such action is completed, the evidence gathered with regard to the overseas partnership with MusicSpace Italy, Bologna does not provide a sufficient basis for confidence in the University's capacity to manage that partnership arrangement soundly.

Appendix A

Commentary on the quality audit report supplied by the University of Bristol

The University takes very seriously the issues identified by the Agency Audit Team in this report and fully accepts that deficiencies in the management of the partnership highlighted by the Agency require attention.

In most cases, these were matters which we had ourselves already identified, were working on, and have now acted upon. These include the following examples.

- The Vice-Chancellor has signed a new collaborative agreement with the Association MusicSpace Italy. This agreement is based on the guidance provided in the University's Guidelines for Educational Partnerships, originally introduced in 1994 and revised in 2003 to reflect internal and external developments, including the precepts of the Code of practice: Collaborative provision.
- A new External Examiner has been appointed solely for the MusicSpace programme.
- At University level, we have asked all Faculty Quality Assurance Teams to investigate arrangements for collaborative partnerships, including any involving student placements, re-inforced by a review of the University's Student Work Placement Code of Practice, looking at safety and management issues in line with the Code of practice: Placement learning.
- The University's Programme Review Group is conducting a review of all overseas collaborative and educational partnership programmes, as defined by the Guidelines for Educational Partnerships.
- We have updated University guidelines, including those for Educational Partnerships, for Faculty Quality Assurance Teams, for Annual Programme Review, and for Programme Directors, to make it clear that these quality assurance processes must include all partnerships with any institution where the education of students is concerned.

It is worth noting that, as indicated in the report, the MusicSpace collaboration has been characterised by a high quality student learning experience, the programme providing comparable academic standards to the postgraduate Diploma in Music Therapy offered in Bristol. The small number of part-time students (20, equivalent to 7 FTE) currently registered on the programme, are entirely satisfied with their experience.

Prior to the Agency Audit visit to Bologna members of the University (including a member of the Teaching Support Unit, a member of the Arts Faculty Quality Assurance Team and a member of staff from the Science Faculty Quality Assurance Team (previously Graduate Dean)) visited MusicSpace, Italy and met students and teaching and administrative staff.

The aims of this University visit were: to assure due recognition of the collaboration; prepare for a more formal written agreement for the partnership; and to confirm quality management and support mechanisms for staff and students. The University team produced a written report indicating the actions to be taken, at University, Faculty and Department level. Many of these correspond with the recommendations made by the Audit Team.

Staff from MusicSpace, Italy visited Bristol during 2003 as part of the continuing development of the partnership. They had meetings with staff from the Department of Music, the Graduate Dean and Administrator for the Faculty of Arts, and a representative of the TSU. The University is satisfied that there are now good communication links between the Bristol Department of Music and MusicSpace staff and students.

To sum up, the University is working with all parties involved to secure improved management for this partnership and to ensure that the existing academic standards and high quality student learning experience are maintained.

Appendix B

Student numbers for the Diploma in Music Therapy, Bologna

Cohort	Number of students who have graduated/(FTE)
1995-1999	23 (8)
1998-2002	21 (7)

Cohort	Number of students currently registered/(FTE)
2001	11 (4)
2003	9 (3)