

# Goldsmiths' College

November 2009

## Annex to the report

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## Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited Goldsmiths' College (Goldsmiths, or the College) to carry out an Institutional audit. The audit enquiry was combined with a scrutiny of the College for the purposes of degree awarding powers conducted in 2008-2009, with the addition of two short audit visits taking place in January and March 2009. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the learning opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards offered by Goldsmiths on behalf of the University of London.

### Outcomes of the Institutional audit

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

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

### Institutional approach to quality enhancement

Overall, the audit team found that the College's institutional approach to quality enhancement was informed by clear strategic direction and was well managed by the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee. The College has supported a number of significant initiatives to enhance the support for learning and assessment.

### Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

The audit team found that the arrangements for postgraduate research students were appropriate and satisfactory and met the precepts of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 1: (Postgraduate research programmes)*. The College will wish to strengthen further its arrangements for the support of postgraduate research students who contribute to teaching.

### Published information

The audit found that reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

### Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas of good practice:

- the development at departmental level of detailed discipline-related assessment criteria, based on the College's generic criteria (paragraph 38)
- the constructive and systematic involvement of students in their contribution to the work of the College in planning, policy development and quality assurance (paragraphs 50, 54 to 56)
- the strategically targeted approach to the enhancement of student learning through the teaching fellowships scheme (paragraphs 59, 66, 99)
- the College's initiatives to support innovative practice in student assessment (paragraph 81)
- the work of the Graduate School in providing cross-college support for postgraduate research and taught postgraduate students (paragraph 140).

## Recommendations for action

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

Recommendations for action that the audit team considers advisable:

- to strengthen the College's arrangements for the timely appointment, and the briefing and support, of its external examiners (paragraphs 26, 110)
- to review the proposed arrangements for external examiner involvement in decisions on awards for joint honours programmes, so as to ensure appropriate externality (paragraph 33)
- to develop and document procedures for programme closure in accordance with the *Code of practice, Section 7* (paragraph 40)
- to strengthen the management of the annual programme review process so as to achieve full and timely compliance with the College's agreed procedures (paragraphs 46, 112)
- to complete the development and implementation of the new framework for the management of standards and quality in collaborative provision (paragraph 117).

Recommendations for action that the audit team considers desirable:

- to seek ways to achieve a more rapid implementation of the College's agreed strategies and policies, particularly at departmental level (paragraphs 28, 46, 98)
- to explore further the opportunities for greater consistency of operation and more effective use of supporting information in the work of examination boards (paragraph 34)
- to specify and implement consistently the minimum level of training and support which postgraduate research students receive before they contribute to teaching (paragraph 90)
- to establish a more comprehensive register for the recording of the College's collaborative partnerships (paragraph 113)
- to develop a more formalised and systematic way of making external examiner reports accessible to student representatives on a programme (paragraph 154).

## Section 1: Introduction and background

### The institution and its mission

1 The College was founded in 1891 as a technical and recreative institute by the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths. In 1904, it was established as Goldsmiths' College by the University of London with the central aim of serving the people of south-east London. After amalgamating with the Rachel McMillan and St Gabriel's teacher training colleges in 1977, in 1988 Goldsmiths became a School, then College, of the University of London. The College was granted its Royal Charter in 1990. It has its own Charter and Statutes but is also required to operate in accordance with the Statutes and Ordinances of the University of London. These permit the College to manage the introduction, withdrawal, teaching and examination of undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes leading to the University's awards. The College is also responsible for the standards and quality assurance of its provision within a collectively agreed quality assurance framework established by the University. The University of London continues to manage the examination of research degrees. Goldsmiths continues to follow the pre-existing guidance in University of London Ordinances on the qualities expected of those awarded the titles of Reader and Professor, but makes its own decision via internal panels on awards of titles to staff who apply. In 2009, the College was in the process of applying to the Privy Council for taught and research degree awarding powers of its own, which it may in the future choose to exercise independently of the University of London.

2 The College is situated on a single campus at New Cross in south-east London. Teaching and research take place within 15 academic departments and a number of smaller centres and units across a broad range of disciplines: in the visual, creative and performing arts; in computing and the social and behavioural sciences; in the humanities; and in educational studies and social work.

3 In 2007-08 the College had a total of 7,621 students enrolled on higher education programmes (6,540 full-time equivalents). These are shown by programme level and mode of study below:

| Level                 | Full-time    | Part-time    | Total        |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Undergraduate         | 4,481        | 494          | 4,975        |
| Taught postgraduate   | 1,392        | 570          | 1,962        |
| Research postgraduate | 415          | 269          | 684          |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>6,288</b> | <b>1,333</b> | <b>7,621</b> |

Approximately 18 per cent of students are studying on a part-time basis and approximately 31 per cent are aged 26 or over. The College also has more than 200 further education students taking courses in the Department of Professional and Community Education. In 2007-08 the College employed 583 academic staff (391.3 full-time equivalent) and 647 (141.4 full-time equivalent) associate and visiting tutors, many of whom are practising professionals in the areas taught by the College.

4 The College's Royal Charter defines its objective as being 'to advance knowledge, wisdom and understanding by teaching, study, public service and research, and to make available to the public the results of such research'. This mission is advanced through 11 strategic aims that are set out in the Goldsmiths' Strategic Plan and which emphasise the student experience, research, and equality and diversity.

### The information base for the audit

5 The audit team had access to the reports of previous reviews: including the QAA Institutional audit of the College in March 2005 and the Review of postgraduate research degree programmes, conducted in July 2006.

6 The College provided the audit team with a critical self-analysis (CSA) document prepared in 2007, in support of its application for degree awarding powers. This described its approach to governance, academic standards, quality assurance and quality enhancement, and described and evaluated its provision for student support and the overall learning environment. In addition the team was provided with a comprehensive range of supporting papers and minutes. The team met groups of students and staff according to a programme agreed with the College. As the audit process was combined with the degree awarding powers scrutiny, information was also gained through the observation of key committees at institutional and departmental level.

7 The Goldsmiths Students' Union produced a student written submission (SWS) which described and commented upon the accuracy of information provided for students, the student experience of learning, teaching and assessment and the ways in which students were able to participate in quality assurance processes, and in the management of the College.

### Developments since the last audit

8 The QAA's audit of the College in 2005 resulted in a judgement of broad confidence in the soundness of the College's present and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and academic standards of its awards. The report noted features of good practice, particularly in relation to new developments and initiatives in learning and teaching, the College's quality agenda, and the important contribution of the support staff to the student experience.

9 The advisable recommendations made in the 2005 report related to: Academic Board's exercise of its responsibilities for quality and standards; the current means of monitoring, evaluating, developing and improving the effectiveness of quality assurance systems, and their impact on enhancement; the need to support the Quality Affairs Office to enable it to ensure that the College's quality assurance processes became fully and thoroughly embedded within departments; the need to consider further the efficacy of current systems for ensuring the comparability of its awards across departments at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Recommended also was the need to develop clearer and more effective decision-making processes for ensuring that the learning infrastructure met student needs; and advice that the College resolves outstanding issues relating to the assurance of the standard of awards in collaborative provision, including the close monitoring of a programme delivered in Lausanne in order ensure a comparable level of learning experience.

10 The desirable recommendations related to: the provision of clearer and more strategic formulations of the College's intentions for enhancement; that the College considers enhancing the involvement of external peers in the final approval of new academic programmes; that the College encourages a more systematic approach to preparation for and response to public, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) in order to enhance learning through the sharing of experience and good practice.

11 In considering the College response to the recommendations of the 2005 audit report, the audit team noted that the College had adopted an explicit follow-up process, managed by the Head of Quality and reported to the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee (LTQC) and to Academic Board. Many of the recommendations of the 2005 audit concerned the structure and responsibilities of committees reporting to Academic Board and their roles in the management and monitoring of quality and standards and in the systematic enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. During 2005-06 the College continued with its Committee Review and from September 2006 the new LTQC took over the key terms of reference from two former committees, the Academic Committee and the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee. The terms of reference of LTQC gave it oversight of the management of quality and standards, on which it reports to Academic Board. LTQC is also responsible for the implementation and effectiveness of the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and has been supported in this by the Quality Office (previously the Quality and Governance Office). The 15 departments of the College have since 2005 each developed their own learning and teaching strategies and action plans. These have been approved by LTQC which receives annual reports on their implementation. All departmental learning and teaching committees are represented on LTQC via their group representative and the audit team was able to confirm that these arrangements enable appropriate reporting, sharing of information and internal feedback in support of quality management processes. The team's scrutiny of documentation and its meetings with staff at College and departmental levels indicated that the new structure and procedures were generally working effectively and were widely understood. The team was able to conclude that the College had put in place appropriate arrangements enabling it to implement effectively its academic strategies and to meet the expectations of the external Academic Infrastructure.

12 A significant development in the management of standards had been the abolition of the College Board of Examiners after September 2008. Its function with regard to the oversight and review of regulatory matters was taken on by the new Standards Scrutiny Sub-Committee. Reporting to LTQC, it was intended that, from 2008-09, this committee would scrutinise results annually and analyse student performance across programmes and departments. At a more specific level the recommendations of the 2005 audit report have led to the following significant changes and developments: an enhanced process for the approval of new programmes, including detailed consideration of external readers' reports by a Programme Scrutiny Sub-Committee, which links approval to departmental plans and the College's resource strategy; the monitoring by LTQC of all reports on accreditation and inspections by PSRBs and the responses by departments to those reports; the piloting from 2007 of a new approach to the annual programme review process; and the development and introduction of periodic programme and departmental reviews.

## The College's framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities

13 As a constituent member of the University of London, the College is empowered to introduce and withdraw programmes and to teach and examine for awards of the University. The College has responsibility delegated to it for the assurance of the standards and quality of its provision and is required to report to the University of London annually on how it has carried out these responsibilities. The required approach to the management of quality and standards is set out in the University of London Ordinances, which include a requirement that procedures have regard to the *Code of practice*, published by QAA. The College has its own Charter and Statutes together with Regulations which govern its provision of taught degrees and these are consistent with the regulatory framework of the University of London. They place formal responsibility for the oversight of standards and quality with the Academic Board. Much of the detailed work is delegated by Academic Board to the LTQC which in turn is supported by the Programme Scrutiny Sub-Committee, the Standards Scrutiny Sub-Committee, the External System Sub-Committee and the Graduate School Board. The College's General Regulations, Programme Regulations and Assessment Regulations set out the formal framework for academic management.

14 Formal responsibility for the oversight of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities is located with the Academic Board. The detailed work is delegated to the recently formed LTQC, supported by the Quality Office. The CSA stated that the rationale behind the formation of the LTQC was to bring learning and teaching and quality management under the oversight of one committee. It was apparent to the audit team that the LTQC was dealing effectively with a wide range of issues, although the formal reporting by the individual departmental learning and teaching committees (DLTCs) to the LTQC was not consistently evident. The College is introducing a digest of the activities of the DLTCs in order to provide an overview for LTQC, but this may not identify situations where an individual DLTC is not fully engaged. The individual arrangements for each DLTC are quite varied across the College, with some departments operating their committees at undergraduate, master's and research levels as three separate events, while others have a single committee covering all academic provision offered within the department. Such arrangements may be attributable to the substantial differences in departmental size and range. The team formed the view that the formal reporting regime described in the CSA would, once fully implemented, be beneficial in aiding the engagement of all DLTCs.

15 The principles and approach to the management of quality and standards are set out in the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Detailed guidance on the strategy is provided by a Quality Handbook which is updated annually and which contains comprehensive details of quality assurance procedures. Routine monitoring and management of the implementation of the quality strategy is carried out by the Quality Office, which provides support to LTQC and liaises with the learning and teaching committees of the academic departments. The Goldsmiths Learning Enhancement Unit coordinates staff development relating to learning and teaching and strategic enhancement activity, including the use of technology to support teaching (see paragraph 95).

16 The award of research degrees is formally the responsibility of the University of London, but many of the functions are delegated to the College and governed by its own regulations and procedures which are set out in the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students (see Section 6).

17 The Warden is the College's chief academic and administrative officer and chairs the Academic Board. The Warden is supported by a senior management team consisting of the three pro-wardens (one of whom is the Deputy Warden), the Registrar and Secretary, and the Director of Finance. The academic departments of the College are each line-managed by one of the pro-wardens. In addition each pro-warden has an area of strategic responsibility; currently 'academic

development', 'research and enterprise' and 'students and learning development'. Support departments are managed by the Registrar and Secretary.

18 The heads of the 15 academic departments are responsible for the management of examinations, student progress, quality assurance, finance, staff, and any other function specified by the Council or Academic Board. Departmental boards advise heads of department on matters relating to resources, teaching, quality assurance, student numbers, research grants, examinations and the organisation of departments. Each departmental head meets regularly with one of the pro-wardens to discuss management, strategy and planning. Each department has a departmental board concerned with general management while the key departmental committee dealing with management of standards and quality is the DLTC. The DLTC reports both to its departmental board and to the College LTQC.

19 The audit team concluded that the College's framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities enabled it to comply with the regulatory requirements of the University of London and to engage fully with the Academic Infrastructure developed by QAA and the higher education sector.

## **Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards**

20 The College views its systems for management of curricula and assessment, including the contribution of external examiners, as the primary means by which it assures the academic standards of its awards.

21 The College outlines its quality assurance arrangements and provides guidance to support them in its Quality Handbook. The handbook comprises sections which cover: programme approval; programme monitoring; course evaluation; external examiners; annual programme review; periodic programme/departmental review; and collaborative provision and partnerships. The handbook is supplemented by further published guidelines which deal with: general regulations; programme regulations; and assessment regulations. In the critical self-analysis (CSA), the College explained that its overall framework for quality and standards embraced the procedures outlined in the handbook, together with the articulation and communication of explicit standards, an effective system of student feedback, strategic resource planning to address appropriate allocation of resources, and the provision of timely and relevant data.

### **Approval, monitoring and review of award standards**

22 The College's Quality Handbook and its website, StaffGold, provide guidance on policies and procedures for staff on programme design, monitoring and approval. The procedures are supported by a number of templates and forms. Staff are supported by the Quality Office which will offer advice and direction on a range of quality assurance matters, including training for programme monitors. The Students' Union also provides training and support for student representatives, who are active participants in monitoring (see paragraph 50).

23 The responsibility for academic approval rests with the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee (LTQC) which considers and approves new programmes on behalf of Academic Board based on the recommendation of the Programme Scrutiny Sub-Committee. The College process for ensuring that an adequate resource allocation is available for new programmes is detailed in the Quality Handbook and in more detailed documentation on planning guidance prepared for departments. The resource requirements are carefully identified and monitored using a template form for resource allocation and the audit team concluded that this was a robust procedure that was operating effectively. A range of strategic planning templates also supports the academic planning and development process.

24 The College provides guidance on drafting programme specifications in the programme approval handbook and draws attention to the requirement to refer to the relevant subject benchmark statements. Additionally, programmes draw on a range of inputs and direction from the various professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), and the College engages with a wide range of such PSRBs. Departments whose programmes are accredited through PSRBs work with them with a degree of autonomy, informing the Quality Office of any planned visits, and forwarding reports and any required response or action plan to the LTQC for its consideration. The audit team explored the validation, review and monitoring procedures (as discussed in Section 3) and noted that a range of external reference points, such as national frameworks, subject benchmarks, employers and PSRBs as appropriate, were contributing to curriculum design, and this was demonstrated in the evidence provided from programme specifications (see also paragraphs 32 and 38).

### External examiners

25 The Quality Handbook describes the role of external examiners and provides supporting documentation for the role. External examiners are appointed by the Pro-Warden (Students and Learning Development) on behalf of Academic Board, normally for a three-year period. The active participation of external examiners was witnessed, for the purposes of degree awarding power scrutiny, by the audit team during the examination board process, and those external examiners observed by the team reported favourably on all stages of their engagement with the respective departments.

26 It was noted by the audit team that a large number of external examiners are approved by the Academic Board to commence their duties quite late in the academic year in which they assume responsibilities. It was also noted that no formally arranged training is provided for external examiners and therefore they rely for guidance on a handbook and liaison with the subject department. It is therefore advisable for the College to seek to strengthen its arrangements in this area by nominating and confirming all appointments in a timely manner. The College should also consider more formal training arrangements for external examiners, especially where they are new to the role, and in the case of the externals covering the collaborative provision.

27 A pro forma is provided for external examiner reports which includes the requirement for comment on the appropriateness of academic standards, the rigour of the assessment process and the equity of treatment for students, comparability of standards and finally good practice identified. The audit team was able to see a sample of external examiners' reports and associated documents, which confirmed the appropriateness of the standards achieved. The team can confirm that the external examiners' reports are being considered and processed as described by the College, although in a small number of cases seen the responses to the external examiners' reports were considered to be limited in depth. Student representatives may have access to external examiner reports within the monitoring procedures (see paragraph 154). The team noted that an annual overview report is compiled by the Quality Office and that this is received by the LTQC and then by the Academic Board. This was found to contain a comprehensive and detailed analysis. The team noted the strength and value of this digest, but considered that the information contained therein would have been more useful to the College had it been considered earlier in the academic year.

### Academic Infrastructure and other reference points

28 The College has made systematic reference to relevant sections of the *Code of practice*, published by QAA in establishing its quality assurance framework. The sections relating to assessment of students; postgraduate research programmes; collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning, and placement learning were considered by the College to have been particularly significant. In 2005-06, a single regulatory and assessment framework was implemented for undergraduate degrees. The College is still considering a move to a fully credit-based framework for undergraduate programmes but considers mapping of the existing

arrangements onto such a structure to be relatively straightforward. Delays in implementing the proposed framework have been attributed to the wide consultation being undertaken, and the potential benefits which will follow from the implementation of a new student record system. The College confirmed that *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) has been the reference point for the introduction of a modular credit based framework at taught postgraduate level, and it is proposing to implement a framework of programme structure, regulation and assessment for postgraduate students by 2009-10. The College acknowledged that progress of the postgraduate implementation has been slow. The College is also considering a framework for Foundation Degrees and the audit team noted that at this stage the proposals required significant further development, and that the timescales established by the College for consideration and implementation would result in an adoption of that framework only in the medium to long term.

29 Programme specifications were introduced in 2003 and now underpin programme approval and review as key course documents. The audit team saw clear evidence in programme specifications of the use of subject benchmarks and recognition of PSRB requirements. Documentation was clearly expressed with clear statements on learning outcomes. Departmental learning and teaching committee (DLTC) processes ensured that external reference points were appropriately considered during the design stage, before proceeding to programme validation.

### **Assessment policies and regulations**

30 The College's Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2006-11 expects each of the academic departments to develop and have approved by LTQC their own strategic plan for learning, teaching, and assessment reflecting their own subject demands and current position. These plans include details of approaches to assessment at the subject level. The audit team noted that many of these plans were constructive and innovative and provided the College with a forward momentum. However, the team also noted the variable pace at which some departments had completed and submitted an agreed plan and as a result the planned time scales for implementation had not been met.

31 A new Standards Scrutiny Sub-Committee (SSSC), reporting to LTQC, was created in 2007. An internal review had identified a role for a deliberative body which would take 'an overview of the operation of examination boards to ensure they are functioning properly'. The terms of reference for the sub-committee also include a 'monitoring and maintaining' role of the College's framework for assuring the standards of all awards, including regulation and assessment processes'. Additionally, SSSC has a remit for assessment strategy, assessment regulations, student progression and achievement, receiving information and proposals from departments and considering how data can be used to inform the development of the standards framework in the College. Although the sub-committee had only recently been formed, the audit team noted the detailed and wide-ranging issues being considered and actioned by the committee, including suggestions originating from within the departments for consideration of wider adoption. The team also observed appropriate consideration of the review and modification of the College's regulations within the sub-committee, planned to take place on a periodic basis. The team noted the SSSC's careful management of the relationship between the institution and the departments when the issue of variability in departmental reporting was evident. The audit team formed the view that SSSC was well informed and giving detailed consideration to standards issues. The team viewed the establishment of the SSSC as a positive development, which would strengthen the College's ability to monitor assessment policy and to maintain academic standards across its departments.

32 The main point of scrutiny of proposed assessment arrangements at programme level or course level is by the Programme Scrutiny Sub-Committee at the course design and approval stage. The audit team saw clear evidence of assessment strategies mapped across to learning outcomes, and individual assessments with identified learning outcomes (see also paragraph 38). The College has uniform minimum standards for first and second marking and external examination and anonymous marking is deployed wherever possible. Examinations are governed

by the assessment regulations and associated procedures which are published annually by the Registry. The formula used to determine progression and calculate degree classifications has been simplified with the introduction of the new regulatory framework for undergraduate programmes, and the team noted the transition arrangements being followed, which ensured that no student was disadvantaged during this transition period.

33 As a part of the recent changes which involved the establishment of SSSC, a previous overarching body, the College Board of Examiners, had been abolished. With this change, the responsibility for determining final results is now located at departmental level with the examination boards. Under the new arrangements, it was not clear to the audit team how the College will achieve a full and appropriate involvement of external examiners from both, or either, of the subject areas at the award stage of joint honours programmes. The team noted the emphasis in the College's statements on the interaction and cooperation between departments and its strong support for interdisciplinary programmes that can emerge from this emphasis. The College will therefore wish to secure the standards of such programmes by ensuring that there is a common assessment framework in place across subjects, and that the relevant external examiners are fully involved. The team therefore considers it advisable that the College review its arrangements for external examiners' involvement with regard to joint honours awards, to ensure all decisions on subject standards are made with appropriate externality.

34 Notwithstanding the valuable initiatives of the SSSC, the audit team noted some variation in the operation of examination boards in the various departments. For example, different practice in the consideration of supporting statistical data and varying degrees of clarity on the use of reporting codes for the student record system. While standards were not considered by the team to be at risk, the opportunity for greater uniformity and better use of supporting information remains available to the examination boards. Maintaining and as necessary extending the training of examination board officers, with a view to reducing such variability, would contribute to an enhancement of the current position. The team therefore recommends that the College explore further the opportunities for greater consistency of operation and more effective use of supporting information in the work of examination boards.

### **Management information - statistics**

35 The College recognises the importance of accurate and relevant statistical data in making planning decisions and in seeking assurance about the standards of achievements of its students. Data is used in support of recruitment and admissions, annual programme review, and examination processes. Work continued during 2006-07 to standardise the format of the data, enabling the various bodies such as Academic Board, the senior management team, and examination boards to be supported in their decision-making. The audit team saw evidence of a range of committees and boards using the data available to good effect, and only in a small number of cases did examination boards appear not to be informed by the range of information available to them.

36 Data from the National Student Survey (NSS), and from internal survey sources, are used to inform a range of committees across the College, and the Quality Office has piloted the production of a digest of NSS data, recognising the need to support committees in extracting information and exploiting the full potential of the data available.

37 The departments receive management information from the current student records system to help them with both quality assurance and planning purposes. However, the College recognises that improvements are necessary in information relating to course management and student progression, and it is planning to secure such improvements through a new student records system. Throughout the audit, the audit team was informed that the timescales for the planned development of a range of issues were intrinsically linked to the implementation of a new management information system. It was clear to the team that the College is now dependent on the success of the future system to achieve the step-change in quality of information that it is seeking.

## Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

### Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

38 In bringing forward new programmes for development and approval, the new planning and reporting process has enabled greater synergy between the College's strategic aims, departmental academic developments, and resource availability (see paragraph 11). After consideration of proposals by the senior management team, those programmes approved and allocated resources are developed and considered by the appropriate departmental learning and teaching committee (DLTC). External readers' reports are commissioned in this development cycle to bring an external viewpoint into the proposal. The programme specifications and course templates include learning outcomes and the audit team noted the mapping of these learning outcomes between the programme and course components at the design stage, ensuring the design integrity of the overall award offered. The College uses 'generic grading descriptors for all undergraduate programmes, onto which subject specific criteria can be mapped to promote harmonisation of practice and standards, as well as transparency'. The team observed subject specific criteria in several awards being developed and embedded in the departmental learning and teaching strategies seen by the team. To support this approach, a detailed programme approval process with supporting templates is presented in the Quality Handbook. The team recognised the care taken in setting these out clearly in the programme specifications and the benefits that followed from such good practice.

39 Final consideration of all new programme proposals is then undertaken by the Programme Security Sub-Committee (PPSC). PPSC also has the 'remit of scrutinising amendments to existing programmes, new courses and changes to existing courses, as well as considering arrangements for programme closure'. Major amendments to programmes are considered in the same way as new proposals, whereas minor amendments are presented in a structured style using templates provided in the Quality Handbook. The Assistant Registrar (Programmes) is able to advise on what constitutes a minor or major amendment. Significant changes such as amendments to programme learning outcomes are referred to the appropriate external examiner for comment.

40 The critical self-analysis (CSA) noted that programme closure is considered by the PPSC and the Quality Handbook includes a template for programme amendment where one of the options is to discontinue a course. The reference in the Quality Handbook to programme closure does not offer any detailed guidance and does not address how the interests of existing students would be protected. The audit team recognised that at various meetings where the phasing out of programmes was under consideration, care was taken to ensure transition arrangements were in place, and students' interests were carefully considered. However, the team also understood from students that closure of programmes in other areas had not initially been communicated to the students. The team also noted that comments relating to programme closure had been raised by several external examiners, as reported to Academic Board. With a view to formal decision-making and explicit communication, the team recommends that the College develops and documents procedures for programme closure in accordance with the *Code of practice, Section 7*.

41 In addition to the range of PSRBs which directly influence at programme level, the College has strong inputs from employers who contribute particularly to those programmes which have a professional or vocational focus. The networking of staff at all levels, from placement supervision through to national committee membership, also contributes external views to programme design. Other inputs include activities such as the College's Business Development Office and the network of part-time visiting tutors. Overall, the audit team found evidence of a wide range of external inputs to the academic programmes and it was clear that these had been a valuable part of the College's academic developments.

## Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

42 Programme monitoring at the College provides the opportunity for student feedback to be received and considered. The Quality Handbook provides a standard questionnaire for soliciting student feedback at course level and outlines the way in which programme monitoring meetings should be structured. It also provides template structures to support the creation of a web-based programme monitoring report. Until 2008-09, meetings of a departmental programme monitoring committee were held twice yearly and chaired by a programme monitor, who was normally independent of the programme. These meetings were attended by the teaching staff and student representatives. Issues were either resolved locally or reported up to College level through the Quality Office.

43 To support the monitoring process, a reporting service based on a web-based database offers the ability for issues raised in monitoring to be uploaded. This enables the College to gain a timely overview of issues being raised and provides an opportunity for early feedback on actions taken or responses received. While the audit team considered this a sound process in principle, scrutiny by the team of the minutes of a range of programme monitoring committees suggested that attendance at these meetings by staff and students had not been high, thus reducing the capability of them contributing effectively to the process as designed. The College had recognised this, and reviewed its procedures for involving students in monitoring and evaluation.

44 In 2007, enhanced arrangements were introduced for student representation on the programme monitoring committees. The new arrangements introduced the role of departmental student coordinator as a paid post and employee of the Students' Union; it was piloted in five departments in 2007-08. The coordinator meets regularly with the Quality Office to progress issues being raised and reported on a database. This scheme of departmental student coordinators has now been implemented college-wide and at departmental level the programme monitoring committee has been replaced by a student-staff forum, which extends beyond the monitoring role (see paragraph 50).

45 In 2004-05 following a pilot, a college-wide process for annual programme review was introduced. This brought together a range of separate reporting activities into a single process with focused aims including enhancement. The annual reports are prepared by the programme leaders and are considered by the DLTCs before forwarding to the Quality Office. The review process was evaluated in 2007-08 and a number of areas for development and improvement were identified including timing and provision of student data reports along with the inclusion of the National Student Survey (NSS) and Unistats data to further inform the analysis. The opportunity to link this work more closely in future to the annual strategic planning process is a further potential development.

46 It was clear to the audit team that securing the current level of implementation of the relevant internal processes had involved considerable effort. Discussions with staff and consideration of the last complete annual programme review reports to the Quality Office revealed that the approach taken by the departments was variable, with many annual programme reports having limited action plans. The team reflected on this variability and considered that the current focus remains on securing effective review and is not at a sufficiently robust stage to enable attention to be predominantly focused on enhancement. The team concluded that processes for monitoring and review have the potential to be fit for purpose and also have the potential to be consonant with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*. However, the team noted that in some areas the scheduling of the annual programme review did not provide Academic Board with a report until 18 months after the end of the academic year under review. Further, for the 2006-07 session the basis for the overview report to Academic Board comprised only 70 per cent of the programmes to be reported, which was in itself a significant improvement on the previous years' level of reporting. The team also noted occasions where no staff member had been appointed to the role associated with leading an annual programme review and the team concluded that this had contributed to the low reporting levels.

Given the College's own view that its procedures for programme monitoring and annual programme review play a pivotal role in its approach to quality assurance, it was clear to the team that there are opportunities for the College to achieve a more timely and complete reporting regime, and the team therefore recommends that the College strengthen the management of the annual programme review process so as to achieve full and timely compliance with the agreed procedures.

47 The College has put in place review procedures for five-yearly major periodic departmental/programme reviews, and all departments have been through the first cycle. The stated aims of these reviews are to extend the existing strategic departmental review and focus on the assurance and enhancement of teaching and learning. The review is based on a self-evaluation and its scope covers: securing learning outcomes; checking the validity of programmes; assuring standards; securing information on quality; developing learning and teaching strategies; and identifying good practice. External subject specialists and senior academics from other departments contribute to the review, along with external advisers. The review considers all aspects of departmental activity; an extended methodology was piloted in 2007-08 to take into account strategic management and financial issues. Review reports are considered by the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee (LTQC) and any recommendations require a departmental follow-up response. The audit team examined and observed a number of periodic review trails and concluded that the process was thorough and rigorous.

### **Management information - feedback from students**

48 Student feedback is an integral part of the College's quality assurance processes and is collected in various ways. Students are asked to provide feedback on each course that they take, via a standard course evaluation questionnaire. A report to the LTQC in May 2008 on quality assurance data and review of quality assurance processes noted that 'some departments choose to use the College's standard OMR evaluation form, while others design their own, but all departments regularly carry out course evaluation'. Heads of department are responsible for ensuring that course evaluation takes place for all taught provision within their department and that it is operated in a consistent and transparent way. Results from course evaluation may be discussed at programme monitoring committee meetings (or the new staff student forums which replace them), and are reported to DLTCs, as well as reviewed in the annual programme review reports.

49 Students who met with the audit team confirmed that they had completed course evaluation questionnaires but some were unsure what had happened as a result of this feedback, although others noted that they were aware of changes to their courses which had resulted from feedback from previous cohorts of students. The team noted that the issues relating to the response to student feedback had been a matter identified during the 2005 audit, and this point was also raised by students in the current SWS (see paragraph 51). The team noted that the College's template for the annual programme review report has a section for the programme team to comment on the level of effectiveness of programme monitoring and course evaluation. In the annual programme review reports seen by the team, the extent of the commentary/analysis in this section varied and sometimes focused on the process rather than the issues raised and action taken. The team heard, in meetings with senior staff, that this was an issue that the College was aware of and was seeking to address; the team strongly supports such action.

50 Working together with the Students' Union, the College has made a considerable investment in the introduction of a revised system of programme monitoring (see paragraph 44). Previously the College had a system of gathering programme level student feedback consisting of programme monitoring committees, chaired by an academic independent of the programme under consideration, and meeting twice-yearly. Training was organised for chairs by the Quality Office and for student representatives by the Students' Union in liaison with the Quality Office. More recently provision has been made for paid departmental student coordinators (DSCs) to promote greater student engagement with the process, and a more timely response to student feedback where appropriate. Programme monitoring committees have also been renamed

staff/student forums in order to promote awareness of a change in emphasis from problem reporting to a student and staff conversation about programme development. The Students' Union recruits and trains the DSCs, in partnership with the Quality Office. The Quality Office acts as a central support for this process, managing a web-based reporting tool which allows for generic, college-wide issues to be identified and reported to the appropriate support department. The Quality Office provides training on the use of the database, and a template agenda for staff/student forums whose headings refer to the headings used by the database. In supporting these new arrangements with a strong student focus, the College has taken considerable care to address problems in implementation.

51 Students who met with the audit team were generally strongly supportive of the system of programme monitoring and of the effectiveness of the student representative system, although the SWS noted that 'feedback regarding resolution in areas of concern is poor'. The report to the LTQC on quality assurance data and review of quality assurance processes noted that departments now routinely upload minutes of programme monitoring meetings to the virtual learning environment (VLE), allowing students to read about issues raised and actions taken in response, although it also noted that students may not always realise that action has been taken since some changes take place for the next cohort, rather than the cohort who raise the issue. The report to LTQC on evaluation of the pilot project again noted that the departmental student coordinators had reported that staff were not letting them know the outcome or the current status of issues. The audit team also noted that the number of staff attending some of the previously named programme monitoring committees was small, but heard this may have been due to the fact that in the previous system staff would not be present, so as to encourage students to give feedback.

52 The NSS provides the College with another source of feedback and the audit team saw evidence that the results from the NSS are analysed in detail and acted upon. For example, the issue of assessment was picked up through the NSS and internal course evaluation and led to the appointment of assessment fellowships, which the College expects will provide the opportunity to devise new methods of assessment and improve the quantity, type and timing of feedback given to students (see paragraph 99).

53 The audit team concluded that the programme monitoring system, including the meetings with staff, has the potential to be an effective mechanism for gaining, and responding in a timely fashion to student feedback and that the College is working hard to ensure that it achieves its full potential. Notwithstanding this, the audit team would encourage the College to continue in its efforts to ensure that all students are aware of the outcomes of, and actions taken as a result of, their feedback from both the course evaluation questionnaires and through the staff student forums.

### **Role of students in quality assurance**

54 The College's partnership with the Goldsmiths Students' Union (GSU) has been strengthened with the establishment of dedicated staff in the Students' Union with a responsibility for academic affairs, and by the introduction of regular meetings between the Students' Union and the Quality Office to monitor and develop systems and mechanisms for student feedback and representation. Joint projects conducted by GSU and the College have included a postgraduate student survey and piloting changes in the programme monitoring system (see above). The SWS also described the Mature Student Experience Project, completed in 2008, as a result of a collaborative initiative between the Research Office, the Students' Union, and the Quality Office. These various surveys and reports initiated by GSU were making a valuable and responsible contribution to the quality assurance information available to the College.

55 Students are represented on all key College and departmental committees. The President of the GSU and other Students' Union sabbatical officers sit on the major College committees such as the Council, Academic Board, LTQC, Academic Development Committee and the Student Committee. At departmental level students are represented on departmental boards and in some

instances on DLTCs. The terms of reference and membership for each College committee are published on the College website and the inclusion of student representation is made explicit. Student handbooks seen by the audit team included clear statements relating to the student representation process and the ways that students can input into the monitoring and evaluation of their learning experience. Minutes of the committees indicated a considerable level of commitment by the relatively small number of sabbatical officers within the GSU. The Students' Union and other student representatives were highly supportive of the College's inclusive approach which they felt compared very favourably to the experience of some of their peers in the sector.

56 Members of departmental periodic review panels meet with groups of students as part of the review process. Minutes of review meetings seen by the audit team showed that student views had been taken into account in formulating the panels' recommendations. In addition, the team heard about a number of other ways in which the College includes students in its policy and decision-making processes. These included the use of student focus groups to gain student opinion on key issues; the instigation of College policy through the student body, for example in the development of the Student Charter; the partnership approach in the development of major College initiatives such as the 3D Graduate (see paragraph 101); and the significant level of collaboration in the programme monitoring system. The audit team formed the view that the College takes a highly inclusive approach to the involvement of students in the life of the College and that the arrangements for student involvement in its quality management processes are most effective. This was judged to be a feature of good practice.

### **Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities**

57 The critical self-analysis (CSA) stated that the College recognises that the recruitment, retention and development of high calibre academic and teaching staff is essential to support the College's mission to provide a high-quality learning experience for students. The CSA also emphasised the view that teaching informed by scholarship and research is a major contributor to the academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience, and the audit team found that this view was corroborated by the evidence that it saw. The College expects lecturers to have a record of well-received teaching, including the development of new courses, the successful organisation of teaching programmes and the ability to demonstrate a reflective approach to teaching and the support of learning. In addition, lecturers on a standard contract are expected to produce research of a quality and quantity equating at least to national levels of excellence in the relevant discipline or research assessment unit.

58 The audit team saw evidence that research activity is a priority within the College and the research activity and publications output of the academic staff at the College are considerable. Many areas of the College's curriculum relate directly to the research interests and expertise within its departments and research institutes. Evidence to support this is found in the relatively large number of programmes offered at postgraduate level in some departments and in recent developments such as the MA in Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship, a cross-college proposal emanating out of the new Institute of Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship. Postgraduate research students who met with the team talked positively about the Goldsmiths experience referring in particular to the high quality of the academic research environment.

59 The audit team learnt that the College learning and teaching fellowships (see also paragraph 99) for 2008-09 were specifically focused on the link between research and teaching. Each of the three fellows appointed were working with the Learning and Teaching Office and the Research Office to look at the question of what the College understands by its belief that its teaching is research-led and what this implies for the practical development of learning and teaching. The expected outcomes of the project were: to enable all departments to consider what they understand by research-led teaching and to decide whether they need to undertake further work in this area; to share good practice between departments; to have a clear

understanding at institutional level what the College understands by research-led teaching and the various ways in which it is constituted; to have formulated a clear statement to be incorporated into the College's research and learning and teaching strategies that gives a commitment to research-led teaching, and suggests how it will work in practice. Each fellow is assigned to work with around five or six departments. The audit team was provided with a copy of a schedule of activities for the fellows that included discussions with academic staff, student focus groups and a 'Creativity and Innovation Network' event, involving among others former and current holders of College fellowships, chairs of DLTCs and heads of departments.

60 The audit team concluded that there was an active research culture in the College and that there was sound evidence that teaching was being enhanced as a result. The team also formed the view that the recent College fellowships which focus specifically on the links between research and teaching were a relevant and appropriate initiative which will further enhance the College's strategy for maintaining and strengthening links between research and teaching.

### **Other modes of study**

61 Goldsmiths is the lead college within the University of London External System for the provision of English and computing programmes. These are delivered to over 3,500 external students. The provision is overseen within the College by the External Systems Sub-Committee, which reports to LTQC, and is managed through the relevant departments with the support of the Quality Office. The University of London External System was audited separately by QAA in 2005. The provision offered by the College through the External System is not covered by the present audit. The College offers no other provision through flexible and distributed learning methods.

62 A number of programmes within the College offer placement opportunities to students. Placements range from those which are a required component of a programme accredited by a PSRB, such as social work or education, to placements that provide students with a corporate/commercial experience such as those offered to design students, to short internships designed to provide an introduction to a particular type of work. The College recognises that there is a variation in the way that placements are managed within the College and in their alignment with the precepts of the *Code of practice*, and it is currently reviewing its approach to placement learning.

63 The audit team learnt that the College's VLE is used to support students while on placement. For example, the Education Department makes use of the VLE to manage communication and develop networks with students while they are in partner schools, and engagement with partner schools is managed using VLE tools. The Design Department also uses the VLE to support students while in partner schools.

### **Resources for learning**

64 Until March 2006 the College's library was part of the larger Information Services Department together with the Computing Services, now called IT Services. In 2006 specialist heads were appointed to each new department. Facilities also include an Audiovisual and Languages Resource Centre. As it is part of the University of London, the College's staff and students also have access to the Senate House Library, which broadly covers the subject range at the College and has significant research collections. The library's strategic plan is based on the objectives of the College and the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy and informed by the Library User Group. Feedback on the service is collected from students through course and programme monitoring and through library staff links to DLTC meetings. The library also gains feedback on specific issues through the use of student focus groups. The library's annual report is reported through the committee structure to Academic Board. A programme of library inductions is offered each autumn to students. The audit team noted that student feedback showed that students were unhappy about some aspects of the library provision, including the number of available key texts and the number of defaced and damaged texts. However, the team

also noted that the recent additional resource allocation to the library was helping to address the issues raised by students and students, who met with the team confirmed the recent improvements in library facilities.

65 IT Services is the central IT provider and includes the Media Services Centre and Reprographic Unit. Development of the services is guided by the College IT strategy and the College aims and objectives, with IT Services' plans having been developed in consultation with academic departments to try to ensure alignment with departmental plans. Liaison with academic departments is achieved through departmental representatives and IT Services staff nominated to support each department. A programme of induction to IT Services is offered each autumn to new students and training is also offered to postgraduate students, and to staff. IT Services monitors its services through a number of mechanisms including feedback from boards and committees, service level descriptions and IT Service annual plans. The annual report from IT Services is considered by the Information Management and Systems Committee.

66 The College has over 300 computers available to students as well as a dedicated 24/7 facility for research students. In addition, a number of departments have their own significant computing facilities for students. Investment in wireless technology has also led to the installation of over 70 wireless access points across campus and a number of the student bedrooms in residential accommodation are networked to allow access to the College's network. Students who met with the audit team were generally satisfied with the IT resources available. The College's VLE, 'Learn.gold', was launched in 2003 and the CSA confirmed that it was now well embedded within departments and is fundamental to supporting many of the programmes the College offers. Staff development relating to the VLE is offered through the Centre for Excellence in Learning Technology (CELT). The College stated that Learn.gold is also increasingly becoming a medium for communication and contact between students on particular programmes. Students described variable usage of Learn.gold across and within academic departments. However, the audit team heard evidence that the College was encouraging departments to further embed the VLE in their learning and teaching activities. This initiative included the appointment of learning enhancement fellows in each department, intended to assist departments to identify what they need to do to move forward in the use of the VLE and any barriers which might be preventing them from doing so.

67 The poor quality of some teaching accommodation had been raised as an issue through student feedback and by external examiners, and the problems in this area are recognised by the College. As a result, a high priority has been placed over the past few years on funding backlog maintenance work of the older buildings. Following a major review of estates during 2005-06 significant changes have been made. Under the new committee structure, the Estates Committee is responsible for strategic planning and policy in relation to the College estate, making recommendations to the Finance and Resources Committee and Council, and for monitoring the delivery of the strategy. The audit team learnt that it is intended that the College estate will benefit from major development over the next three years and that a master plan for the whole College estate was being drawn up for autumn 2009. Nevertheless, there were clearly some unsatisfactory features with regard to quality of the current teaching accommodation provision and the team heard evidence of student dissatisfaction with some of the specialist space available and with timetabling. The team learnt that a space utilisation survey had been instigated and that the future implementation of a college-wide timetable should facilitate better use of the College's estate.

68 Notwithstanding the problems experienced with regard to teaching accommodation, the audit team concluded that, overall, the physical learning support resources, and in particular, the library, IT and the VLE are generally fit for purpose and adequately support students in achieving their learning outcomes. The team also concluded that the College's arrangements for the provision, allocation and management of learning resources are generally effective and that the College has systems in place to address any deficiencies in the current provision.

## Admissions policy

69 The CSA stated that the main aims of the College's admissions procedures are to select appropriately qualified applicants who show the potential to benefit from the programme and successfully achieve the standards required for the award; to satisfy the various admissions targets the College sets itself and to provide a supportive and efficient student-friendly service to all potential and actual applicants. The College's recruitment, admissions and international activities are currently structured as three divisions within the Student Recruitment and Admissions Office, which is part of the Registry, as follows: the student recruitment and international office which covers recruitment activities for home, European Union (EU) and international applicants; an admissions office dealing with the admissions activities for home, EU and international applicants; and a widening participation office.

70 The College's Recruitment and Admissions Policy, agreed by Academic Board in June 2002, was being reviewed at the time of the audit. The policy covers the admission of both undergraduate and postgraduate students and aims to ensure the fair assessment of applications and the promotion of professional standards for both academic and administrative admissions practitioners. The College's recruitment and admissions procedures take account of the relevant section of the *Code of practice*. The Recruitment and Admissions Policy sets out the responsibilities, in relation to recruitment and admissions, of various College committees including Academic Board, of role-holders including heads of department and admissions tutors and support areas such as the Student Recruitment and Admissions Office. The College's Disability Co-ordinator assists in the review of admissions procedures.

71 The College produces prospectuses and publishes relevant information for applicants on its website, which has been recently redesigned and relaunched in recognition of the important role it plays for applicants. The College prospectuses are supplemented by departmental booklets which give detailed information on programme content, course options, assessment and support issues. The College also produces a number of other publications such as booklets on funding for students and a guide for new international students. Open days for prospective students are also organised. The SWS noted some concerns among taught postgraduate students about satisfaction with their programmes once at the College compared to their expectations prior to coming but the SWS attributed this mainly to 'course structure and timeliness'. The audit team was provided with examples of the information published for prospective students in both hard copy form and on the College's website which it concluded was clear and complete.

72 New students are sent an information pack which as well as information on enrolment, includes a copy of the Information for Students Handbook, which summarises a variety of information, including assessment, accommodation, and health and welfare support. It also has links to web pages on the College's website, which includes details of the College's General Regulations. A welcome page for new students provides guidance and information both pre and post-arrival. The College's 'introductory week' includes a formal programme of activities at both College and departmental levels with the Students' Union playing a major part in the delivery of a range of activities including the Freshers' Fayre. Additionally, the Student Recruitment and International Office Team organises events for new international and external students.

73 Applicants' satisfaction with the implementation of the College's admissions and enrolment policies and procedures are measured through surveys and through the monitoring of applicants' correspondence and complaints. Starting as a pilot in 2005, the student experience of their pre-arrival and initial weeks at the College was measured through an enrolment and induction survey, which was also undertaken in 2006. The SWS noted that the 2006 survey showed that a majority of respondents were positive about their experience of the admissions, enrolment and induction processes. The evaluation report also made a number of recommendations aimed at improving the overall experience. The audit team heard that the internal survey has now been discontinued and replaced by use of the Student Barometer and the International Student Barometer. In discussion with the audit team students confirmed that

they had attended an appropriate induction programme which they had found useful, and that the introductory week had taken place for both new and returning students.

74 As well as more formal communication through the committee structure, there is a College network for admissions tutors. Training is provided for admission tutors at an autumn admissions tutors meeting. In addition, two meetings are held each term, one each for undergraduate and postgraduate admissions tutors. Admissions tutors are provided with a full and helpful Admissions Practitioners Handbook which covers a wide range of information. While this handbook is a comprehensive document, the 07-08 handbook provided to the audit team contained some very out-of-date information, such as reference to the Universities and Colleges Admission Service procedures for 2003, and reference to countries still as 'non-EU', that have now joined the EU. The team would urge the College to ensure that the utility of the handbook is not adversely affected by the inclusion of out-of-date information.

75 Academic Board receives a detailed report on admissions activity at least annually in the autumn term. This report covers the College's performance regarding a number of internal data such as applications received, applications converted and enrolments as well as benchmarking against the College's peer group competitors. The audit team saw some evidence that during the student admission cycle, and especially during the clearing process, some areas or departments recruited students above the planned and approved level. This was to offset weak recruitment patterns in other areas. In these circumstances planned resources do not always immediately match resource needs, and the College should be alert to any circumstance where rapid adjustment is required.

76 From the evidence available the audit team formed the view that the College maintains appropriate oversight of the operation of its admissions procedures and that the implementation of its admissions policy is consistent.

## **Student support**

77 In the CSA the College noted that changes made in 2006 to the portfolio of the Pro-Warden (Students and Learning Development) had brought learning, teaching and assessment in closer relation with the wider 'student experience' agenda. Since this change the College has developed a Student Experience Strategy, agreed by Academic Board in February 2008, and which covers the period 2007-08 to 2010-11. This strategy aims to 'provide an appropriate framework of academic social and personal support to ensure that students at all levels and from all backgrounds value the experience of studying at the College'. The College notes that it is not a free-standing strategy but is incorporated within the College's overall corporate plan and seeks to support the College Strategy. It is also linked to the College Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and the IT Strategy. The strategy covers issues ranging from the learning environment, student financial support, student representation, the Students' Union, support for international students and students with disabilities and personal development planning (PDP), among other aspects. The strategy is monitored and reviewed annually by the Student Committee. At the time of the audit visit it was too early for the audit team to consider the impact that the Student Experience Strategy was having on the student experience.

78 The College has also developed, in collaboration with the Students' Union, a Student Charter, approved by Academic Board in June 2008. The aim of the Charter is to give students an idea of what to expect during their time at the College and also what is expected of them, as well as where to go for further support or information. The Charter covers the pre-application and application stages, the students' time at College and as alumni of the College. Students who met with the audit team were not able to articulate the impact that the Charter was having on their experience, but given its relative newness the team formed the view that this was not unexpected.

79 Students are allocated a personal tutor, who acts as a point of contact for both academic and pastoral issues. Personal tutors are expected to advertise their office hours and are encouraged to see their students on a regular basis. Department heads are responsible for designating staff as personal tutors and allocating individual students to them. The College's personal tutoring guidelines were introduced in conjunction with the PDP and revised for 2005-06 to establish a baseline of provision for departments to meet. The College has also recently developed a helpful Personal Tutor Handbook made available to staff on the website. PDP was relaunched in 2006-07 as the 3D Graduate Scheme (see below). The senior tutor role supplements that of the personal tutor. Senior tutors take referrals from colleagues, counsel students who are considering withdrawing from their programme, support disabled students applying for examination concessions and act as a point of contact for central welfare services. Students who met with the audit team, although supportive overall of the personal tutoring system, had had variable experiences of the system; they were aware of the senior tutor role. The team also learnt that some departments find it difficult to get students to attend scheduled personal tutoring sessions. The Students' Union advice service complements the roles of personal and senior tutors and acts as a further point of referral for students.

80 The College's PDP scheme is delivered through the 3D Graduate Scheme, which promotes development across three areas: personal, academic and career development. The scheme is delivered through a website and through the personal tutoring system. The College recently noted that despite several initiatives to promote the 3D Graduate scheme, the uptake was still low, and this accorded with comments made to the audit team in meetings with students, where their understanding of, and participation in, the scheme was variable. The team noted a report to Student Committee in which the College was considering additional ways in which to engage students in the PDP process (see also paragraph 101).

81 Discussions with students gave a variable picture in relation to the timeliness and usefulness of the feedback they received on their assessed work. Some students were very positive about the formative feedback they received on work not contributing to their final award, while others stated that they rarely received their (summative) assessed work back, and felt they were not getting sufficient feedback on their assessment to improve performance on later assessments. This view accords with a report presented to LTQC in October 2006 from the College's feedback on assessment project which noted that 'it appears that almost without exception departments do give routine and structured feedback on performance where students are asked to submit work for assessment that does not contribute to their final award (i.e. formative assessment).....fewer departments provide some form of feedback beyond the final agreed mark for work that contributes to their final award (i.e. summative assessment)'. A later report from the project made proposals for baseline provision for feedback on assessment. Through the work of the project and in other ways, the audit team saw considerable evidence that the College is addressing feedback on assessment, identified as an issue both through internal feedback systems and the NSS, and that it is aware of the need to ensure that all students receive useful and timely feedback on both their formative and their summative assessed work. The commitment made to investigating and improving this area of its work was considered to be good practice.

82 The complaints and appeals procedures are set out in the College's General Regulations, which are divided under three sub-headings: academic complaints; personal complaints; and non-academic or non-personal complaints. The Students' Union Advice Centre provides advice and guidance to students on making complaints and appeals, encouraging them where appropriate to resolve complaints through informal procedures. Where complaints cannot be resolved at an informal level, the Advice Centre assists students in the formulation of formal complaints. If not resolved informally the formal complaints procedure is instigated by writing to the Academic Registrar.

83 The Regulations also inform students of their right to an appeal, the grounds that are acceptable and the appropriate process. The College has revised its procedures for the notification of extenuating circumstances, having noted that the most common basis for successful appeals has been on the grounds of extenuating circumstances that students did not bring to the attention of the examiners in good time. For both complaints and appeals, students are informed of the outcome in a 'completion of procedure' letter that also contains the information they need to take their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Academic Board receives an annual report on complaints and appeals. On the basis of the evidence available, the audit team concluded that the College has in place appropriate and confidential mechanisms to deal with all complaints regarding academic and non-academic matters.

84 The College is developing an integrated approach across all support services for service delivery. Student Support Services comprises a range of services coordinated by the Head of Student Support Services, reporting to the Registrar and Secretary: Counselling, Chaplaincy, Disability Support, Student Funding and Information, Bursaries and Scholarships, Advice and the Nursery. These services work with academic departments to provide support to students. In addition there are specialist services such as the Careers Service, Medical Centre and Language Studies Centre. Information and guidance on support services is communicated to staff and students through induction, student handbooks and the College website, as well as in individual service publications and visits to individual departments. Each service has its own feedback and review mechanism to measure effectiveness and the College undertakes periodic service reviews. In addition to the support and services offered to all students, the College has a dedicated International Office and provides additional support to its international student community through the Advice Service and the Language Studies Centre. The SWS reported that students were generally satisfied with the support services available. The audit team saw evidence of appropriate annual reporting on various support services through the College's committee structures, for example the comprehensive annual report on the College's Counselling service to the Equality and Diversity Committee.

85 Overall, the audit team formed the view that the College's arrangements for student support were comprehensive and effective.

### **Staff support (including staff development)**

86 The College's strategic aim in relation to human resources is 'to recruit and retain high-quality and appropriately-qualified staff in all areas of the College, to provide an effective framework for staff development, to develop good management and leadership skills, to develop an effective culture of clear, two-way communication between staff and management, and to reward good performance'. The College appointed a new Director of Human Resources in January 2007 and changed the name of the department from 'Personnel' to 'Human Resources' with the aim to move to a more strategic and proactive service based on a 'business partner' model. The Human Resources Strategy, written in 2001 and revised in 2004, was comprehensively changed in May 2008 following a review.

87 The CSA stated that the pedagogic effectiveness of staff is monitored and measured through various means including student feedback and achievement, and mentoring and performance management in the department. It was not clear to the audit team, however, whether these measures were systematically considered in appraisal or in the promotion process. Although observation of teaching is a requirement for staff undertaking the Postgraduate Certificate in the Management of Learning and Teaching, there is currently no college-wide system for this. Guidelines for teaching observation, originally presented to the then Learning and Teaching Committee in 2005, are published on the College website and staff are encouraged informally to make use of them. The audit team heard that the College is considering making peer observation a requirement for all staff.

88 The promotion of pedagogic effectiveness is a key part of the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The audit team saw considerable evidence that teaching and pedagogic development within disciplines was a priority for the College, for example through the recent development of the departmental learning, teaching and assessment strategies, the use of learning and teaching fellowships, the significant part that teaching and learning plays in the College's promotion criteria, and the recent formation of the Learning Enhancement Unit, bringing together the work of the Learning and Teaching Office and CELT. Students were generally positive about the quality of the teaching they experienced; this evaluation is also reflected in the College's NSS outcomes and expressed in the SWS.

89 Newly appointed academic staff without a formal teaching qualification, are encouraged to take the College's Postgraduate Certificate in the Management of Learning and Teaching, the responsibility for which lies with the Learning and Teaching Office. The audit team learnt that the College was currently considering making this qualification a contractual requirement for all new staff.

90 A substantial minority (28 per cent) of the visiting tutors teaching undergraduates at the College are postgraduate research students. The College's position on supporting them in this role remained unclear to the audit team. In meetings with staff the team heard that those students undertaking teaching duties of 10 hours per week or more were eligible to undertake all or part of the Postgraduate Certificate in the Management of Learning and Teaching, and that all PhD students were encouraged to participate in that programme. Most departments provided a level of guidance and training on teaching. Postgraduate research students met by the team indicated that while all had received some preparation for a teaching role, at least the induction session for visiting tutors (2 hours) and a session on marking and assessment (1 hour), few had been observed teaching or engaged in double-marking to allow them to be sure they were assessing appropriately. Some had had regular contact and advice from the programme convenor. Visiting tutors were supported by a mentor, but it was not clear to what extent this included specific guidance on teaching. Undergraduate students who met the team described variable, sometimes negative, experiences of being taught by postgraduate research students. The postgraduate research students described inconsistent and sometimes inadequate support for their teaching responsibilities. The team, therefore, concluded that in order to improve the quality of learning opportunities for postgraduate research students it would be desirable for the College to specify a minimum level of training, including systematic support, which those students should undergo before and during their contribution to teaching.

91 The induction of new staff takes place at both institutional and departmental levels. Training and development needs are established as part of the interview process and during induction and probation for new staff, and then as part of the appraisal process. The audit team learnt that recently the College has changed the probationary period for academic staff to one year. All new academic staff are appointed a mentor within the department. Mentors' responsibilities include giving guidance on good teaching practice, observing at least one teaching session during the period of the probation; advising on assessment procedures and reviewing a sample of their marking; providing advice and guidance on departmental systems and College processes as well on research funding and management. Staff who met with the team spoke of a positive experience in the support received from mentors. The team learnt of a recent revision to the mentoring scheme with more emphasis on coaching and the decoupling of mentoring from performance management, coaching is also used in the College as an approach to support academic and other managers.

92 The College introduced new procedures and criteria for academic promotions in 2006-07 to ensure that equal weight is given to the three categories of teaching, research or comparable activity and administration. Goldsmiths continues to follow the pre-existing guidance in University of London Ordinances on the qualities expected of those awarded the titles of Reader and Professor, but makes its own decision via internal panels on awards of titles to staff who

apply. Promotion panels meet on an annual cycle, with outcomes being reported to Council. Unsuccessful candidates for promotion are offered feedback and, as with the College's recruitment process, the promotion process is monitored in relation to gender, ethnicity and disability with an annual report being made to the Equal Opportunities Committee. The audit team learnt that the College is currently reviewing its policy and procedures relating to progression and promotion.

93 The College operates an annual appraisal scheme, performance and development review (PDR) for all staff. This places emphasis on the personal development of staff within the context of the objectives and strategic direction of the College, and informs the planning for staff development provision. The audit team learnt that the scheme was considered as part of the Human Resources review, which found that staff were not always convinced about the link between PDR and staff development planning. Proposals for enhancing the role of PDR in strategic planning and staff development have now been considered by the College's senior management team. Staff who met with the audit team were generally supportive of the PDR process.

94 The CSA noted that the Staff Development Unit has a key role in fostering a staff development culture which reflects the College's mission and values and which focuses on facilitative interventions. The emphasis at the time the CSA was written was on the Staff Development Unit providing individualised learning programmes according to need, rather than large-scale mandatory programmes. Hence the Staff Development team at that time was coordinating a programme of coaching, action learning and mentoring as part of a move towards embedding a 'coaching culture' in the College as well as providing a central programme of skills-based programmes and customised staff and organisational development solutions for academic and administrative departments. The audit team learnt that the College is considering taking a more strategic approach to staff development by, for example, addressing larger scale strategic development needs. Staff who met with the audit team confirmed that the staff development opportunities on offer within the College were relevant to their work and were considered generally to be valuable.

95 The Staff Development Unit also works closely with the Learning and Teaching Office and the Centre for Excellence in Learning Technology, which at the time of the audit were being combined as a unit, to form the Goldsmiths Learning Enhancement Unit. In order to facilitate the Staff Development Unit's responsibility to 'join up' staff development across the College, a website on the College's intranet acts as portal for all internal staff development providers. The College has an informal internal staff development network consisting of representatives of all of the internal staff development providers and others who have an active involvement in staff development, which the College believes could become a more formal group in the future. An annual report regarding staff development activity undertaken across the College is presented to the Equality and Diversity Committee of Council and Academic Board.

96 From the evidence available, the audit team forms the view that the College's arrangements for staff support and development are generally effective. There is evidence of staff engaging with the pedagogic development of their discipline and of a vibrant research agenda. An exception to this generally positive picture is the lack of clarity around the formal, college-wide support for postgraduate research students undertaking teaching duties.

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

97 The College formulated a revised Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy during 2006-07 which sets out the strategic agenda for learning, teaching and assessment enhancement within the College from 2007-08 to 2010-11. It was clear from reports to committees that progress with the implementation of the strategy was being monitored and that targets were being met. In general, the new strategy was playing a central role in the College's enhancement agenda, and in the raising of the profile of learning, teaching and assessment within the College.

98 The departmental learning and teaching committees (DLTCs) are charged with formulating departmental learning, teaching and assessment strategies in line with the overarching College strategy and are seen by the College as key to its successful implementation. The audit team saw evidence that DLTCs were generally discharging their responsibilities in accordance with their terms of reference. The team also saw evidence of the discussion, and development, of the departmental strategies. The team observed, however, that it had taken some considerable time to ensure that strategies were completed and submitted for all departments and that the planned timescales were not always met. The audit team learnt that the departmental strategies were to be published on the College's website thereby allowing access by students.

99 The Learning and Teaching Office was established in 2004 by the College to coordinate strategic enhancement activities. One of the ways in which it engages academics in learning and teaching developments is through the learning and teaching fellowships scheme. Strand 1 fellowships provide for grants to allow small-scale projects that are most likely to address a 'local' departmental interest, while Strand 2 fellowships allow staff to be seconded into the Learning and Teaching Office and are directed at areas that the College wishes to address strategically. As described elsewhere in this report, the audit team observed that these fellowships had been used in effective ways to address the strengthening of e-learning, assessment strategies, and links between research and teaching. The team considered that the fellowship scheme was a valuable contribution to enhancement and constituted an example of good practice.

100 The Centre for Excellence in Learning Technology (CELT) focuses on the use of technology to enhance teaching practice and provides resources for academic staff to develop learning resources and approaches through the use of fellowships. CELT was reviewed in June 2007 when it was recommended that the work of the Learning and Teaching Office and CELT be brought more closely together to enable a more strategic institutional approach to the enhancement of learning opportunities. As noted above, at the time of the audit the Learning and Teaching Office and CELT were being merged into a new Learning Enhancement Unit. The new unit will have responsibility for supporting the operational implementation of the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

101 The CSA provided a number of other examples of enhancement activity, including in particular the 3D Graduate initiative which the College formulated in collaboration with the Students' Union. The concept of the 3D Graduate is envisaged by the College as the key mechanism through which students can be supported in developing skills and attributes through and beyond their academic programmes. The scheme offers students a set of tools and resources via a website, which also provides links to a wide range of opportunities available at the College, such as the Students' Union, Careers Service, Language Studies Centre and others. The website also provides the opportunity for students to keep a record of progress, either as a paper-based portfolio or an online workspace and e-portfolio. Students who met with the audit team were supportive of the concept.

102 From the evidence available to it the audit team concluded that there was a clear focus on improvement and the sharing of good practice and that the enhancement agenda as defined in the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy was central to the College's operations.

## **Section 5: Collaborative arrangements**

103 The College's collaborative provision is presently very limited in scope, although the audit team heard of plans to expand this activity in the future as part of the broad development strategy. At the time of the audit, the College had only one significant collaborative partnership: the award of a Goldsmiths' Postgraduate Diploma in Art Psychotherapy delivered through a partnership in Bern, Switzerland. The Goldsmiths programme (at that time more extensive) was one of a number of institutional partnerships reviewed in the course of a QAA Overseas quality audit in 2002, and was subsequently also considered in the context of an Institutional audit in 2005.

104 The QAA overseas audit report expressed particular concern about the management of academic standards that, until the College was able to address the matter more thoroughly, 'only qualified confidence [could] be placed in the management of standards for this partnership'. The specific concern here derived from the assessment arrangements involving a language other than English; the lack of provision for moderation by College staff; and the limiting nature of the appointment of an external examiner 'with no recent experience of UK higher education'. Other matters identified for attention by the report included follow-up of validation conditions; programme monitoring; staff exchange and development; and information for students of the Institute concerning their status and rights.

105 The QAA report (March 2005) considered progress made in addressing these concerns on collaborative arrangements. While progress had been made on several of the issues identified, the 2005 report noted that 'the College will wish to ensure that the programme reports received in due course from partner institutions have adequate visibility in its annual processing sequence'. The report also notes that 'in response to concerns about the absence of arrangements for double-marking or moderation of work by College staff (a position which continues), the College is engaged in coordinating an annual assessment exercise'.

106 In November 2005, the College undertook a cross marking exercise among the collaborative partners then actively working with the Postgraduate Diploma in Art Psychotherapy and that exercise reported a 'gratifying level of consensus'. However, the College was unable to identify any further moderation of student assessments other than that performed by the chair of the examination board and by the external examiner. To establish the current position, the audit team focused on the collaborative provision in Bern, noting that previous links with Berlin and Lausanne have no further student intakes. In 2006, a periodic review of the college-based MPhil and PhD in Art Psychotherapy took place, and this was followed by a periodic review in Bern by the same panel, which included external members to the College. From the audit trail seen by the team, the collaborative review appears to have been focused at programme level, and only handwritten notes on the financial model appeared to contribute to the formal record of the review event. Following this review, a new formal agreement was signed in January 2007, the previous agreement having lapsed in March 2006, although there were students enrolled during this interim period. The new agreement was properly detailed and reflected current practice. However, the team would encourage the College to be more timely in renewing its agreements to ensure all students are adequately protected.

107 The agreement states that the partner institution will be responsible for 'setting student assessments and assignment programmes in accordance with the College Regulations'. In the case of the Art Psychotherapy programme, generic assessment requirements were approved during the validation process. Given that the language of tuition and assessment in the partner institution is German, and no translation of material has been undertaken since 2005, the College was not immediately able to identify how they secured standards based on an evaluation by their own academic staff. The College indicated that that was the responsibility of the external examiner assisted by the annual visit of the chair of the examination board.

108 The audit team recognised that this matter was now being addressed, since in the newly proposed collaborative framework the arrangement for translation of student work is articulated, and also requires translation verification on a sample basis by the College, to enable College staff to undertake moderation of the proposed marks before forwarding the material to the external examiner. An interim arrangement for 2009 was proposed, given that the sequence of dates already scheduled for examination board meetings would not fully accommodate this new framework.

109 The 2005 QAA audit report also notes 'the College has not yet been able to appoint an external examiner with the linguistic and experiential scope necessary to provide full oversight of the assessment process and standards of achievement; indeed, some recent difficulties have been identified concerning the role. Given these continuing circumstances, the College is advised of the need to resolve its difficulties in assuring the standard of awards in its collaborative provision'.

Between 2005 and the 2008 problems with the appointment of an external examiner in the collaborative role had intermittently continued to exist, with difficulties in a recent appointment of an external with appropriate language skills but no UK higher education experience. This was reported to the team as an appointment at short notice which had been carefully considered by the College and approved in accordance with the College's regulations which allowed for UK higher education experience not being required in exceptional circumstances. Later in 2008-09, a further external examiner, who was able to examine in both German and English, was appointed. This established a team of two external examiners, one of whom covered the programme in both Bern and Goldsmiths, and the other covering only the Goldsmiths programme. This appointment thus returned to the more satisfactory arrangement, with a view to safeguarding standards, that had previously existed in 2005-06.

110 Recent external examiners appointed to work with the collaborative partner in Bern had also reported on the apparent lack of preparation and training to undertake their duties effectively. The College's current arrangements for the briefing and induction of external examiners are addressed in paragraph 26. External examiners appointed with responsibility for collaborative provision may receive more information on the role when they meet with the chair of the examination board or the head of department. The audit team considered, however, that this arrangement for the briefing of external examiners for collaborative provision did not align sufficiently well with the expectations of the *Code of practice*.

111 The College provided the audit team with a sample certificate and transcript for a student on the programme. On the certificate it stated the language of tuition was French, and on the transcript it stated the language of tuition was German. The College advised the team that these were draft copies of certificates that had already been identified as having an error during a cross-checking process and would not have been issued to the student. The College informed the team that the proposed new management information service would automate this process, which currently required manual intervention.

112 The College had regularly received annual monitoring reports from its partner institution and these reports were found to be broadly consistent with information reported for the annual monitoring of on-campus provision. The QAA audit reports of 2002 and 2005 noted that the visibility in annual monitoring of these monitoring reports was limited. The College informed the audit team that the partner's annual report is typically received at a later stage than the timescales within which the on-campus programme proceeds through annual monitoring, both at the departmental learning and teaching committee stage and within the College's wider processes, and as a result the report would not appear in the annual digest. The team considered it a matter of some concern that it was not possible to give a report on collaborative provision full consideration within the standard process. The team formed the view that the timing of the current arrangements for annual monitoring reduced its potential benefits and it recommends that the College reviews the timeliness in reporting and consideration of the annual monitoring activity.

113 The College has an entry on its website providing brief details of the collaborative partners with which it engages. However, the College was not able to identify for the audit team a more detailed register or central record of its collaborative partnerships, and suggested that because of the limited scale of such activity it relies on institutional memory. The team considers it desirable that the College should implement a systematic and informative collaborative provision register, particularly in light of its strategy to expand this area of activity.

114 The current agreement with the collaborative partner outlines the requirement to provide the College with any promotional material produced. The audit team was informed that the Quality Office formerly had the capability to consider such material produced in German. The team was also advised that the communications department has the capability of monitoring web-based material produced by the College's partners. The College was not, however, able to point to any systematic approach used to check material published by its partner institution.

115 The College's Quality Handbook 2008-09 included a section on collaborative provision and partnerships which stated that collaborative arrangements will be 'subject to the programme approval process, with particular attention being paid to the arrangements for the assurance of quality and standards, financial viability and overall sustainability'. The Handbook also offered an outline for exploring new partnerships. The audit team formed the view that these guidelines were limited in scope and not sufficiently detailed to provide a framework which could securely follow the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 2*.

116 In March 2009 the audit team was presented with a draft of a proposed new framework for collaborative provision, which was at that time in the process of being approved and adopted by the College. The College had undertaken a considerable amount of work to frame a more developed strategy for collaborative partnerships, and to draft the new quality assurance procedures included within the framework. The framework addressed a number of the points of concern that had been identified by the team. These included specified requirements for translation of assessment, for the appointment of external examiners, and for the scrutiny of publicity material. The team judged that this new framework was comprehensive and had the potential to secure collaborative provision in a more robust way, once fully implemented.

117 Notwithstanding some initiatives in this context by the College, the audit team found that the expressed concerns relating to collaborative provision articulated in the 2002 and 2005 QAA reports remained, at best, only partially addressed in 2009. The team therefore advises the College to complete the approval process for the new framework at the earliest opportunity and subsequently ensure its full implementation.

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

### **Institutional arrangements and the research environment**

118 The award of research degrees is formally the responsibility of the University of London, but many of the functions are delegated to the College and governed by its own regulations. Ordinances 12 and 15 of the University of London set out criteria for programmes of study and for the admission, registration and supervision of research students. The College Regulations are consistent with the requirements of the University of London.

119 The College's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students sets out the roles and responsibilities of students, supervisors, heads of departments, and departmental postgraduate and research committees. The Code describes required procedures from registration to the submission of a thesis. The College Code is reviewed annually and revised where necessary. The Code has been aligned with the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, published by QAA. The requirements of the College Code are also set out in the Research Student Handbook that encapsulates all the regulations and policy into a single document.

120 Once a thesis has been completed, it is submitted for examination to the University of London, and MPhil and PhD examinations are conducted under the authority of the University of London Research Degrees Committee. The Dean of the Goldsmiths Graduate School is a member of that committee.

121 Responsibility for the standards and quality of research degree programmes lies with the Academic Board. However, detailed oversight and management has been delegated to the Graduate School Board whose terms of reference include oversight of College policies governing provision for postgraduate research students, and responsibility for monitoring the progress, progression and completion of research students. In addition, the Board's terms of reference include the making of recommendations to Academic Development Committee on matters to do with strategic planning and policy development relevant to the Graduate School.

122 The Graduate School Board is chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School and reports to the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee and Academic Development Committee, and through them to Academic Board. Membership of the Board consists of a member of academic staff from each departmental discipline group and up to three additional members of academic staff coopted by the Board. There are three student members appointed by the Students' Union Executive Committee of whom at least one is a research student and another a taught postgraduate. Research students are also members of departmental postgraduate/research committees and departmental boards. The Board is supported by the Head of the Graduate School Office and the ex-officio members are the Pro-Warden (Academic Development), the Academic Registrar, the Head of the Quality Office and the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee.

123 The Board considers and formally appoints examiners for research degrees on behalf of Academic Board (a delegated authority from the University of London). It monitors the College's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students and recommends to Academic Board revisions where necessary in the light of changes to external requirements, such as the *Code of practice* and the FHEQ.

124 The Dean and Secretary of the Graduate School are involved in the development of new research degree programmes and the Graduate School Board considers all proposals as part of the approval process, in which it makes a recommendation to Learning and Teaching Quality Committee which, if agreed, culminates in formal approval by Academic Board.

125 From the autumn term 2008, the College introduced a system of annual programme review of postgraduate research degrees. The Graduate School Board receives reports from the departments on their provision of research degree programmes including a programme review template that covers: data on training and supervision; student feedback, examiners' reports, enhancements in provision and support and statistical data on progression and completion. The reports are analysed by the Dean of the Graduate School and an overview is prepared for consideration by the Board. The Board also considers annually: a digest of first term reports; data on postgraduate supervision; feedback from the Postgraduate Training Programme Monitoring Committee; and a digest of external examiners' reports.

126 In 2005, the College had planned to undertake a periodic review of provision and support for research degree students. In the event it was decided to substitute for this the institution-wide mapping exercise undertaken in order to draft the College's submission to QAA's 2006 Review of postgraduate research degree programmes. The Quality Office and the Graduate School intend to undertake another institution-wide review in 2011.

127 The research environment supporting the work of postgraduate research students is particularly strong. All 15 of the College's Academic Departments provide support and supervision for research students. In addition research degree supervision is provided by the cross-disciplinary Centre for Cultural Studies. As a proportion of all students the number registered for research degrees is high compared with the sector at just under 10 per cent. The mean number of research students in a department was 44.5. Over the last five years, 407 staff had produced 444 monographs, 1,005 chapters in edited volumes, 2,148 articles in learned journals, 1,014 creative works or examples of practice as research, and provided 440 consultancies to other organisations. Research income from all sources has risen rapidly over the last four years, and of this over 46 per cent was funding from the UK Research Councils. In 2005, despite its relatively small size, Research Councils UK data indicated that the College had achieved the country's third highest success rate for its grant applications to the research councils. In the Research Assessment Exercise, in terms of the proportion of its profile assessed as 4\*, the College was the ninth most successful institution in the UK. This clearly reflects the presence of individuals with international reputations for their work among the College's academic staff. Overseas research students met by the team emphasised that the College's reputation for cutting-edge work had attracted them to the institution and they confirmed that the intellectual and practice-based research environment contributed substantially to the educational and research experience.

## **Selection, admission and induction**

128 Selection and admission are governed by the Ordinances of the University of London which require a minimum entrance requirement equivalent to an Upper Second class honours degree at a UK university. The College's Recruitment and Admissions Policy sets out principles designed to ensure the fair assessment of applications and describes service standards for the consistent treatment of applications across the College. Many applications are made after informal contacts with departments and their staff.

129 Members of academic staff dealing with postgraduate admissions attend training sessions run by the Admissions Office. Applicants are interviewed by at least two members of staff with expertise in the area of the proposed research. Interview panels assess candidates' research and practice abilities and identify appropriate supervisory and training requirements. The College's Code of Practice on Equal Opportunities, on which departmental admissions tutors receive training, requires that all applicants are considered equally on the basis of their academic qualifications and suitability for the programme of research applied to. All applicants are given an opportunity to visit the College and to meet academic staff and the Disability Co-ordinator.

130 When an applicant is made an offer a standard format is used which sets out financial costs and any support that will be provided by the College, supervision arrangements, and any expectations of teaching or other duties. Incoming students are sent an information pack containing information on registration, academic and welfare support services, accommodation, and any specific conditions of their acceptance. The pack also includes the current Research Student Handbook and the College Training Handbook.

131 An induction week is run each September by the Graduate School. There are, in addition, student-led campus tours, library tours and social activities designed to introduce students to the Graduate School and the research student community. All the departments run induction sessions addressing the more specific provision within their disciplines. A small proportion of students are admitted in January or April. While some tours are repeated for them, including that of the library, they are asked to take the next induction week session. The College also makes many aspects of induction week available through videos that can be viewed at any time. The students met by the team reported that they had found the information sent to them before arrival and the processes of induction were useful and accurate.

## **Supervision, progress and review**

132 The College Code requires that a student only be admitted onto a research programme when suitable supervision is available, a research topic has been agreed and appropriate facilities are available. At the end of the first term a report to the departmental postgraduate research committee and to the Graduate School confirms that the agreed provision has been met. This is part of the first monitoring review of a student's progress. Subsequent monitoring must take place at least once a year.

133 A formal progress of upgrading takes place with two examiners and the supervisor acting as observer. The Graduate School provides information and training on the upgrade procedure. Progress of first-year students is also monitored in Spring Review Week, during which students give a 10-minute talk on their research plans to a multidisciplinary audience. This presentation is one requirement for upgrading.

134 Each postgraduate research student has a main supervisor, who is the first point of contact, and a second supervisor. There are two overlapping types of second supervisor, and the most appropriate form is chosen in each case, depending on the experience of the supervisor, the range of expertise needed, or whether the research will be carried out in collaboration with an external organisation. In addition, a reserve supervisor has a more limited role and stands in readiness should either of the main supervisors take research leave, leave the College or become

ill for a substantial period. The reserve supervisor will at least become acquainted with the student and his or her work and be ready to help should it become necessary. The Code of Practice sets out in detail the responsibilities of supervisors.

135 Expectations regarding the frequency and nature of meetings between student and supervisor are set out in the College's Code of Practice. It is recommended that full-time students receive at least a one-hour supervision each fortnight during the first year of study and twice a term thereafter. Brief, dated records must be kept by supervisors of each meeting. An annual report is completed by both the student and the supervisor and is reviewed by the departmental postgraduate research committee. As part of personal development planning, an online research development record can be maintained by students to record training and other events attended. The research students met by the team confirmed that they were aware of these procedures and that they were adhered to. The students, particularly those on practice-based MPhil/PhD programmes which include practice or performance-based work in the creative arts, drew attention to the fact that access to their supervisors and other academic staff was an everyday part of departmental activity.

136 Postgraduate students participate in the research community through regular seminars, invited lectures, events and collaborations. This included a series of fortnightly interdisciplinary seminars at which students in the later stages of their research presented their work. Research centres provide opportunities for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, and the College has important links with other universities in London and colleges within the University of London. Some of these directly involve research students, for instance, joint PhD workshops and research networks.

137 In 2006, the QAA Review of research degree programmes examined the College's provision and concluded that overall the institution's ability to secure and enhance the quality and standards of its research degree programme provision was appropriate and satisfactory. As examples of good practice, the audit team noted the wide-ranging opportunities for students to present their work in Spring Review Week, attend seminars and receive financial support for conference attendance. No particular recommendations were made but it was suggested that additional attention be paid to completion rates across the College's departments. Analysis of HEFCE seven-year completion rates for full-time students suggested that the College was at or slightly above the sector average but greater attention could be paid to the progress of overseas students, part-time students and switch students. Subsequently, the College introduced the monitoring of progress after the first three months and enhanced feedback at the end of the first year. A revised fee structure was introduced to encourage four-year full-time submission and seven-year part-time submission.

### **Development of research and other skills**

138 Relevant departments within the College have been recognised by the Economic and Social Research Council as training outlets, with appropriate generic and discipline-based training opportunities, for the award of quota studentships, and by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for the award of its studentships. At the time of audit the Graduate School Board had overseen a review of training provided for research students in the arts and humanities in order to inform a successful application to the AHRC.

139 At the start of a student's research degree the supervisor leads the student in a training needs analysis. Students are encouraged to maintain a research development record using the facility available on the virtual Graduate School website. Identified needs are met by encouraging students to attend relevant College training courses, departmental seminars and external training events. Workshops on research methods and other skills are provided for new students in their first and second terms.

140 The Graduate School publishes an annual handbook of courses available to research students. Attendance on a set of core skills modules is compulsory. Departments provide additional training tailored to disciplinary requirements. Students met by the team reported that departmental provision varied in volume and intensity and indicated that the Graduate School was playing an increasing role in organising joint meetings and cross-disciplinary seminars. Beginning in January 2008, the Graduate School had set up a new course in academic practice available to all research students in their second and third years of full-time study (or equivalent) which built on the generic training provided in the first year. The course was accredited by the Higher Education Academy for the award of Associate Membership. At the time of the audit the Board was exploring the possibility of making research methods courses provided to students in particular departments more widely available. In the view of the team there was evidence that the Graduate School was making a positive contribution to availability and range of skills and other courses for postgraduate research students.

### **Feedback mechanisms**

141 Postgraduate research students are represented on departmental postgraduate research committees and on departmental boards. At College level, two postgraduate research student representatives are nominated by the Students' Union to sit on Graduate School Board. The College Generic Training Monitoring Committee includes five representative student members and members of staff involved in the training. The Committee reviews the training course in the light of student feedback. Outcomes are reported to all research students and Graduate Board.

142 Students can give direct feedback on particular training course components, using standard course evaluation forms. The annual progress report, completed by both the student and the supervisor, also provides opportunity for students to give feedback on their programme. The research students met by the team indicated they would normally expect to feedback through their supervisor and in the annual report. However, they were aware of mechanisms available and college and departmental level.

### **Assessment**

143 The assessment of research degrees is the responsibility of the University of London. Procedures are communicated to students and supervisors through the College's Research Student Handbook, and to examiners in the guidance handbook when they are appointed. The University lays down the procedure for the appointment of examiners, and the criteria for appointment. Proposed examiners are approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. Two, or exceptionally three, examiners are appointed, one of whom has to be external to the University. Examiners prepare independent preliminary reports and a final joint report. University procedures are reviewed regularly and developed by the University's Research Degrees Committee. Information on the examination process is given in the Research Student Handbook.

### **Representations, complaints and appeals**

144 The procedure for dealing with students' complaints and grievances is set out in the Research Student Handbook, and attention is explicitly drawn to it as part of induction week. Minor complaints are dealt with in the department, by consulting with supervisors, the departmental postgraduate research committee chair or head of department. Students also have access to the Research Office staff, the Postgraduate Research Student Coordinator, the Dean of the Graduate School and ultimately the Pro-Warden (Students and Learning Development). For more serious complaints, there is a formal students' complaints procedure set out in the General Regulations to which students are directed from the College and departmental handbooks and the Students' Union website. The procedure explicitly facilitates issues raised by research students and sets out the necessary steps for formal complaints, the rights of the student and the responsibility of the relevant parties in the College.

145 The Students' Union runs an advice centre for students to provide professional advice on issues relating to academic programmes. A full-time member of staff specialising in complaints and appeals is available through the advice centre and provides support and advice independent of the College. Students who have exhausted the internal procedures of the College are informed of their right to ask the office of the Independent Adjudicator to investigate their cases.

146 The audit team concluded that the College's management of its research degree programmes met the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section one: Postgraduate research programmes*. The team also considered that the creation of the Graduate School, and within it particularly the Graduate School Board, had begun to enhance the experience of research students across all departments of the College.

## Section 7: Published information

147 The Communications and Publicity Office has overall responsibility for corporate and student publications produced by the College. The office manages the production of a range of publications, including Undergraduate, Postgraduate, PACE (Programme and Community Education) and PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) prospectuses; Study Abroad and EU/International prospectuses; departmental student recruitment publicity (booklets, leaflets, postcards and posters); Introducing Goldsmiths booklet, graduation brochure, and other corporate publications. The Office also provides clear guidelines for departmental handbooks. All publications can be downloaded from the Goldsmiths website and are also available in larger format.

148 The content and presentation of publications are guided by the College's publications policy, web publishing policy and guidelines for the production of printed materials. Consistency is monitored by the Communications and Publicity Office and, where necessary, matters are referred to the Assistant Registrar (Programmes). Where web pages are involved, support and oversight are also provided by the Web Team in IT Services. The Reprographic Unit provides advice on implementing the College's guidelines on branding and presentation of the corporate identity.

149 At the time of the audit, the Registrar and Secretary was completing negotiations within the College for the reorganisation of central administration which would create three main administrative departments. Within the proposed arrangements the Communications and Publicity Office was to be placed with the Recruitment, Admissions and Widening Participation sections of the Registry into a new Department for Marketing, Recruitment and Communications and would assume complete responsibility for all corporate communications, including the content of web pages. IT Services would have responsibility only for the infrastructure supporting the College's web presence.

150 Goldsmiths, reflecting the importance of communication and design in many of its degree programmes, places particular emphasis on clear and attractive communication in all its publications. The new Student Experience Strategy attaches importance to the use of IT to support the provision of information and guidance in student support areas, including the enhancement of the use of the virtual learning environment; and creating web-based applications to enable students to engage with 'self-service administration' wherever possible.

151 The College's Strategic Plan places emphasis on successful external and internal communication with potential and current students and staff as well as with external organisations and professions, particularly in the creative industries, with which many departments at the College engage. Central to this intention was the redesign and relaunch of the College website in 2007. Internally, key elements are 'StudentGold', the student web pages, learn.gold, the virtual learning environment for students, and 'StaffGold', the portal for academic and other staff. At the time of the audit, a site for graduate students, 'GradGold' was in development. There is also a dedicated website for Council members.

152 In addition to web-based information, the College produces a wide range of internal publications including: a Guide to Goldsmiths (for Students); the termly corporate newsletter, Student Hallmark; departmentally produced student handbooks; and other information, all of which are generally produced within a broad design template which results in consistency of look, layout and content. At the time of the audit, the College was developing a Content Management System to maximise the consistency and efficiency of the production of information.

153 Programme specifications are available from the Academic Registrar's Office. Shortened versions are provided within the student handbooks produced by each department. The audit team examined a sample of specifications for taught programmes and found them to be accurate and complete. Students receive information relating to assessment at the commencement of their programme of study, mainly through their programme handbook which will include a copy of the programme specification linking assessment criteria and learning outcomes. The Student Charter, recently approved, makes the more general assessment processes and expectations clearer for the students.

154 The reports of external examiners may be seen by student representatives as a part of the consideration of those reports within the annual monitoring and programme review procedures. However, discussion with groups of students suggested to the audit team that many students were not aware of the reports, and that student representatives had not always reliably had the opportunity to see them as a part of the procedures. It would be desirable for the College to develop a more formalised and systematic way of making external examiner reports accessible to student representatives on a programme.

155 The College has provided a full and up-to-date set of information for presentation on the Unistats website. Robust mechanisms are in place for the verification of the data provided and to check its consistency. The Higher Education Statistics Agency returns are based on data extracted from the student records system. Enrolment processes are audited annually by internal auditors, and the enrolment and assessment data held by departments are checked by Registry staff with those held centrally.

156 Students met by the audit team confirmed that information they received before arrival and on induction was comprehensive and accurate. All students receive student handbooks which provide information on matters such as staff contact details; College support services; assessment information; plagiarism guidelines; course units; resources; tutorial systems; and complaints and appeals procedures. The College provides a template for departments to use in the production of their student handbooks. Students who met the team felt the handbooks were informative and useful for reference. The team concluded, on the basis of the examples made available to them, that the student handbooks were clear and comprehensive, and of value. They also confirmed that information to support their learning and assessment, and relating to student support services was readily available and that they found that the 'StudentGold' and 'learn.gold' websites almost invariably provided the information they required.

157 The audit found that reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

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