

Goldsmiths College

MARCH 2005

Preface

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

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

The purpose of institutional audit

The aims of institutional audit are to meet the public interest in knowing that universities and colleges are:

- providing HE, awards and qualifications of an acceptable quality and an appropriate academic standard, and
- exercising their legal powers to award degrees in a proper manner.

Judgements

Institutional audit results in judgements about the institutions being reviewed. Judgements are made about:

- the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards
- the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the institution publishes, and about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards.

These judgements are expressed as either **broad confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence** and are accompanied by examples of good practice and recommendations for improvement.

Nationally agreed standards

Institutional audit uses a set of nationally agreed reference points, known as the 'Academic Infrastructure', to consider an institution's standards and quality. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), which include descriptions of different HE qualifications
- The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of the what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study. They outline the intended knowledge, skills, understanding and attributes of a student completing that programme. They also give details of teaching and assessment methods and link the programme to the FHEQ.

The audit process

Institutional audits are carried out by teams of academics who review the way in which institutions oversee their academic quality and standards. Because they are evaluating their equals, the process is called 'peer review'.

The main elements of institutional audit are:

- a preliminary visit by QAA to the institution nine months before the audit visit
- a self-evaluation document submitted by the institution four months before the audit visit
- a written submission by the student representative body, if they have chosen to do so, four months before the audit visit
- a detailed briefing visit to the institution by the audit team five weeks before the audit visit
- the audit visit, which lasts five days
- the publication of a report on the audit team's judgements and findings 20 weeks after the audit visit.

The evidence for the audit

In order to obtain the evidence for its judgement, the audit team carries out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the institution's own internal procedures and documents, such as regulations, policy statements, codes of practice, recruitment publications and minutes of relevant meetings, as well as the self-evaluation document itself
- reviewing the written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences
- exploring how the institution uses the Academic Infrastructure.

The audit team also gathers evidence by focusing on examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work using 'audit trails'. These trails may focus on a particular programme or programmes offered at that institution, when they are known as a 'discipline audit trail'. In addition, the audit team may focus on a particular theme that runs throughout the institution's management of its standards and quality. This is known as a 'thematic enquiry'.

From 2004, institutions will be required to publish information about the quality and standards of their programmes and awards in a format recommended in document 02/15 *Information on quality and standards in higher education* published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The audit team reviews progress towards meeting this requirement.

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Summary

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited Goldsmiths College (the College) from 14 to 18 March 2005 to carry out an institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards. The College is authorised to award degrees of the University of London.

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

The words 'academic standards' are used to describe the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an academic award (for example, a degree). It should be at a similar level across the UK.

Academic quality is a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their award. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them.

In institutional audit, both academic standards and academic quality are reviewed.

Outcome of the audit

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

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

Features of good practice

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

- the commitment and proactive contribution of members of institutional

and departmental support staff to the enhancement of the student experience

- the sharing of good practice via regular meetings of the departmental administrators with representatives of the Quality Affairs Office (QAO) and the Registry
- the support being given to learning and teaching through initiatives being undertaken by the Learning and Teaching Office and through the availability to Departments of Centre for Excellence in Learning Technology (CELT) fellowships
- the initiatives of the QAO in developing the College's quality agenda, including staff development initiatives in collaboration with partner institutions.

Recommendations for action

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

- develop a clearer and more effective decision-making process for ensuring that the learning infrastructure meets student needs
- assure itself that it has in place comprehensive means of monitoring, evaluating, developing and improving the effectiveness of its quality assurance systems, and their impact on enhancement
- provide on a continuing basis such support for the QAO as will enable it to ensure that the College's quality assurance processes become fully and thoroughly embedded within departments
- resolve outstanding issues relating to the assurance of the standard of awards in collaborative provision
- monitor closely the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology and Creative Art Therapy programme delivered in Lausanne in order to ensure that the quality and standard of the student's learning

experience is maintained at a level comparable with that of other centres including the College

- monitor and evaluate its proposed arrangements, when and where implemented, for Academic Board's exercise of its responsibilities for quality and standards, with particular reference to the role of Academic Committee and other key committees
- consider further the efficacy of its current systems for ensuring the comparability of its awards across departments at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

It would be desirable for the College to:

- strengthen involvement of external peers in the final approval of new academic programmes
- provide a clearer and more strategic formulation of its intentions for enhancement
- encourage a more systematic approach to preparation for and response to professional bodies in order to enhance College learning through the sharing of experience and good practice.

Design; History; Media and Communications; Psychology

To arrive at the conclusions and recommendations in the paragraphs above, the audit team also conducted a number of discipline audit trails to find out how well the College's systems and procedures were working at the discipline level. The College provided the team with documents, including student work, and the team spoke to members of staff and current students. As well as supporting the overall confidence statement given above, the team considered that the standard of student achievement in all the programmes was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The team considered that the quality of learning opportunities

available to students was suitable for programmes of study leading to those awards.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings the audit team also investigated the use made by the College of the Academic Infrastructure which QAA has developed on behalf of the whole of UK higher education. The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points that help to define both good practice and academic standards. The findings of the audit suggest that the College has responded appropriately to the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements, programme specifications and the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA.

From 2004, the published information set will include the recommended summaries of external examiners' reports and of feedback from current students for each programme. The College was alert to the requirements set out in the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) document 02/15, *Information on quality and standards in higher education*, and to the implications of document HEFCE 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance*, and was moving in an appropriate manner to fulfil its responsibilities in this respect.

Main report

Main report

1 An institutional audit of Goldsmiths College (the College) was undertaken during the week commencing 14 March 2005. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the College's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility for conferring degrees of the University of London (the University).

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

3 The audit checked the effectiveness of the College's procedures for establishing and maintaining the standards of its academic awards; for reviewing and enhancing the quality of the programmes of study leading to those awards; for publishing reliable information; and for the discharge of its responsibility for conferring degrees of the University. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with HEFCE, SCOP and UUK, the audit included consideration of examples of institutional processes at work at the level of the programme, through discipline audit trails (DATs), together with examples of those processes operating at the level of the institution as a whole. The scope of the audit encompassed all of the College's provision, including its collaborative provision.

Section 1: Introduction: Goldsmiths College

The institution and its mission

4 The College originates from the Technical and Recreative Institute founded by the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in 1981. It became established as Goldsmiths College by the University of London in 1904 to serve Southeast London. In 1977 two teacher training colleges, Rachel McMillan and St Gabriel's, amalgamated with the College. It later became a full School of the University of London and then received its Royal Charter in 1990 as Goldsmiths College.

5 The College has its own Charter and Statutes but as a member of the University of London the College is required to operate in accordance with the Statutes and Ordinances of the University. This means that under powers devolved by the University, all the degrees awarded by the College are University of London degrees.

6 After a period of considerable expansion of student numbers in the 1990s, there was a total of 7,932 students in 2003-04 representing 4,825 undergraduate and 2,609 postgraduate students. Other statistics for 2003-04 include around 34 per cent part-time students studying at the College and 37 per cent of undergraduates classified as mature students.

7 The College is located on a single urban campus in New Cross. The College comprises 15 academic departments and two Centres. The academic profile of the College comprises the following disciplines: visual, literary and performing arts, social and behavioural sciences, computing, design, the humanities and educational studies. Teacher education forms an important element of the College's provision with 12 per cent of qualifications awarded at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in 2002.

8 The College offers a range of further education courses, from Access, Foundation Certificate and Certificate programmes in the Department of Professional and Community

Education aimed at adults returning to education. In 2003-04 there were 443 students registered on these programmes both on a part-time and full-time basis.

9 At the time of the audit, the College was in the process of appointing a new Warden with Professor Stables in the position of the Acting Warden.

10 The College has a strategic plan for 2001-06 and has started a second phased plan to take the College up to 2010. The current strategic plan sets a vision statement for the College and sets out strategic aims for academic, infrastructure and financial matters. The nine basic aims set out in the strategic plan for the College as a whole were as follows:

- increasing academic specialisation
- increasing the size of the College
- increasing postgraduate orientation whilst maintaining broad stability in undergraduate numbers
- creating centres of excellence in all disciplines, and across disciplines
- celebrating outstanding academic achievement wherever this is identified in the College
- modernising buildings, equipment and technological infrastructure
- developing the relationship with the local community
- maintaining commitment to the continuous improvement of the student experience
- continue to promote the policy of equal opportunity for all staff and students.

The vision statement stated that these 'underlying aims of the [strategic] plan are to enhance the College's achievement in research and teaching, to improve its reputation, to increase its income, and thereby guarantee its long-term, independent prosperity'.

11 The College's collaborative provision is currently limited to two partnerships with institutions in Bern and Berlin that offer a postgraduate Diploma in Art Psychotherapy as

an award of the College. This collaborative provision was addressed as an integral part of this institutional audit and is discussed in further detail in paragraphs 115 to 120 below.

Background information

12 The published information available to the audit team included:

- QAA continuation report from June 2002
- the audit report for the overseas partnership with Institut für Transpersonale Psychologie und Kreative Kunsttherapie, Bern, Switzerland, from December 2002
- QAA subject review reports published since March 1999
- QAA subject reports for three developmental engagements.

The College provided QAA with:

- the institutional self-evaluation document (SED)
- the College's quality handbook
- a discipline self-evaluation document (DSED) for each of the four areas selected for DATs
- supporting documentation for the DSEDs, including documents referenced within them, and examples of assessment instruments and examples of student work
- a variety of other policy, strategy and operational documents.

13 The Goldsmiths College Students' Union provided the audit team with a students' written submission (SWS) on behalf of students at the University.

14 During the audit visit further documentation was provided, including: minutes of committee meetings, policy papers, quality monitoring data, periodic review data, and access to the institution's intranet.

The audit process

15 A preliminary meeting between the Assistant Director and representatives of the College took place, at the University on 1 July

2004, to discuss the College's provision and internal review arrangements. Following this meeting, QAA identified that four DATs would be conducted in the course of the audit. On receipt of the institutional SED and SWS, the audit team confirmed that DATs would be in Design; History; Media and Communications; and Psychology. The SED and SWS were received in November 2004, and the DSEDs were received in January 2005. The DSEDs had been prepared specifically for the purpose of the audit.

16 The briefing visit took place from 7 to 9 February 2005. Three meetings were held during the course of the visit to discuss matters raised by the SED and SWS with the Acting Warden, a group of senior staff responsible for the management of quality and standards of awards, and student representatives. At the end of the briefing visit a programme of meetings was submitted to the College in preparation for the audit visit.

17 At the preliminary meeting for the audit, the representatives of the Students' Union were invited to submit a SWS, to express their views on the student experience at the College. The document can be used to identify any matters of concern or commendation with respect to the quality of the student experience and the standards of awards. The analysis took the form of a questionnaire completed by 335 students with key issues, then taken to three student forums comprising 10 students each. Information was also sought from Programme Monitoring Representatives during their training.

18 The audit took place from 14 to 18 March 2005. During the audit visit the audit team met with staff and students both at institutional level and in relation to the selected DAT areas. The team is grateful to all those who made themselves available to discuss the College's quality management and academic standards arrangements.

19 The audit team comprised Mr A J Buchanan, Professor A Cryer, Dr M Wynne-Davies, Reverend M Hayes, Professor R Usherwood and Mr S Murphy (audit secretary). The audit was coordinated for QAA by Dr D Gale, Assistant Director.

Developments since the previous academic quality audit

20 The College was the subject of a quality audit report in 2002. The 2002 audit report asked the College to consider a number of recommendations including, reflecting on the ways in which the Academic Board exercises its responsibilities for quality and standards and how it assures itself that its delegated responsibilities are carried out; to continue to review the Department Review process; to proceed with the review of the regulatory framework; and to expedite the work of the Quality and Standards Working Party. The audit also noted the desirability of progressing the central monitoring of the consistency of content of student handbooks.

21 The SED commented upon the action taken by the College to address the audit report's recommendations. The audit team was satisfied that action had been taken in response to most of the recommendations. These included: the establishment of a new regulatory framework ensuring parity and consistency in grading across all undergraduate programmes; the development of a new process of annual programme/department review and the institution of periodic programme/department review; the mainstreaming of quality affairs and standards into the work of the Academic Committee and the broadening of the Quality Affairs Offices (QAO) remit; and the production of a centralised template for department handbooks. The team noted that work on clarifying the role of the Academic Board and its sub-committees has been taken forward by a working party, which initially reported in 2003 and led to a wider ranging review of the College's governance and committee structure. The review is still underway and while it has led to significant changes, the evidence available to the team indicated that progress had been slow in developing a clear structure, whereby the Academic Board may exercise its responsibilities for quality and standards with particular reference to Academic Committee and other key committees.

22 There have been three developmental engagements since the last audit in the areas of sociology, English and comparative literature, and computing. The reports expressed confidence in the academic standards and in the quality of learning opportunities that support students in these subjects. The reviewers also expressed broad confidence in the internal review processes of the relevant departments. In addition, there has been an audit of the College's overseas collaborative provision, which consists of the link with the Institut für Transpersonale Psychologie und Kreative Kunsttherapie (ITP) in Bern, Switzerland. The audit made several recommendations including ensuring that programme approval processes are clearly communicated and followed up; ensuring that programme monitoring is fully understood; ensuring the quality assurance processes continue to be applied after approval; to reconsider assessment processes undertaken in languages other than English; to review the extent to which staff from both institutions are able to work together to clarify expectations and to provide guidance; and to ensure the quality of documentation provided to students of the institute concerning their status and rights. The audit team was satisfied that the College had taken action on most of these issues, but advised that outstanding issues relating to assuring the standards of awards are resolved in a timely fashion (see paragraph 126 below).

23 The audit team formed the view that the College had responded effectively to the issues raised from the previous audit apart from one instance, where the response to the recommendation for the review of the role of Academic Committee could have been done in a more timely manner.

Section 2: The audit investigations: institutional processes

The institution's view as expressed in the SED

24 The College stated in the SED that its approach to the management and assurance of academic quality and standards is based on 'an institution-wide shared ethos of professional concern for the quality of teaching provision and the student learning experience'. While academic departments have immediate responsibility for teaching quality, all other areas of the College contribute 'in a vital way' to the student's learning experience. The maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards is 'an integral part of the management of all activities and functions within the College'. The College emphasised the contribution of 'research-led teaching' to academic standards and the student's learning experience. Beyond this, the College described an institutional system of quality assurance processes 'that all Departments should be operating consistently and reporting on to the College via appropriate offices and committees'. The College's Quality Handbook underlines the enhancement as well as monitoring or audit function of the quality assurance processes.

25 Formal responsibility for the oversight of academic quality and standards is located with the Pro-Warden (Academic) and two committees, the Academic Committee and the College Board of Examiners, which are both chaired by the Pro-Warden (Academic). The SED noted that these committees report to the Academic Board, 'which is responsible for the academic work of the College'. Enhancement in learning and teaching is the focus of the College's Learning and Teaching Committee, also chaired by the Pro-Warden (Academic). Responsibility for ensuring that the College has 'appropriate and robust' mechanisms for the assurance of quality and standards and that the College and its departments are operating these effectively lies with the Head of Quality Affairs and the QAO. The SED stated that central

oversight of academic departments' conduct of quality assurance processes had been perceived as in need of strengthening, and that the QAO's liaison with departments had been notably enhanced during the previous year (see paragraph 31 below). In addition, the recent introduction of regular meetings between the QAO and the Students' Union has facilitated monitoring and development of student feedback mechanisms, which the College sees as integral to its quality assurance system.

26 The SED stated the College's responsibility for the standards of its taught (undergraduate and postgraduate) programmes leading to awards of the University of London; the standards of research degrees completed under the College's supervisory arrangements remain, however, the University's responsibility. Academic standards are assured under a regulatory framework which is considered below (see paragraph 34 below).

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

27 The College's committee system as a whole, from College Council down, has been under review since 2003-04, and prior to this a review of the Academic Board and its reporting committees was undertaken in 2002-03. A key object of review has been to improve the arrangements whereby the Academic Board exercises its responsibility for 'the academic work of the College in teaching, examining and research'. The review received some impetus from the QAA quality audit report of June 2002, which had raised questions about the working relationship between the Academic Board and its key sub-committee, the Academic Committee, and about the Academic Board's capacity, in view of the arrangements, to satisfy itself that its responsibilities were being fulfilled. The audit team understood from its discussions with senior College managers that current practice is for the Academic Board to receive and consider all papers from its committees, so enabling it to assure itself of its effective oversight of quality and standards.

28 At the time of the present audit the College was moving towards the establishment of a revised committee structure which, in respect of some reporting lines, it had already begun to implement. Critical to this revised structure is the position of the Academic Committee, described in the SED as 'pivotal', since it is the body charged with detailed consideration of the academic policy and standards 'in an integrated way'. Thus the College has determined that other key sub-committees of the Academic Board will in future report not directly to the Board but through the Academic Committee. The Learning and Teaching Committee has begun reporting to the Academic Committee, and it will be followed by the College Board of Examiners and the External Systems Committee. The Postgraduate Research Students Committee, which at present reports to the Research Committee, will from 2005-06 also report to the Academic Committee. Under these revised arrangements, matters concerning learning and teaching policy, assessment policy, and oversight of quality and standards in both postgraduate research provision and the external programmes will be filtered through the Academic Committee en route to the Academic Board. Hence, there will be three tiers of consideration for many areas of policy and procedure relating to academic quality and standards. The College will need to identify and monitor the specific function of each tier to ensure both that work is not duplicated and that responsibility does not become obscured among the various parties. Given the Academic Committee's holistic role in overseeing quality and standards, and the Academic Board's ultimate responsibility in these areas, the College is encouraged to review its practice of not submitting the integral minutes of committee meetings to the Board. In the absence of full sets of minutes the audit team considered it doubtful that the Academic Board would be able to obtain a clear overview of the activities and conduct of its principal sub-committee. In general, the College is advised to monitor and evaluate its proposed arrangements, when and where they are implemented, for the Academic Board's exercise of its responsibilities for quality and standards,

with particular reference to the Academic Committee and other key committees.

29 Departmental boards, which have advisory powers in respect of the head of department on the one hand and the Academic Board on the other, report to the Academic Board and will continue to do so under the new structure. The departmental boards are seen by the College as having a key role in operating institutional policies and procedures for the assurance of quality and standards. Departmental monitoring committees report to departmental boards. Departmental learning and teaching committees have been established and report both to the departmental boards and to the College Learning and Teaching Committee, whose membership now includes the chairs of the departmental learning and teaching committees. The College review of the Academic Board and its committees had as an outcome a significant increase in academic representation on the College Learning and Teaching Committee as well as on the Academic Committee. At the same time, the College has preserved the benefits of extending membership of academically focused committees to representatives of other College departments, as in the inclusion of the Training and Development Manager in the Learning and Teaching Committee.

30 The Warden is the principal academic officer of the College and is supported by a senior management team (SMT) consisting of three Pro-Wardens (Academic, Students, and Research) on four-year appointments from the staff, and the College Secretary, the Director of Resources and Planning and the Head of Finance, who hold permanent positions. Line management of heads of academic and administrative departments is distributed among SMT members. The Warden, Pro-Wardens and Heads of academic departments meet on a regular basis as the Warden's Advisory Group, which the College sees as a valuable 'sounding board' for new ideas prior to their formal consideration. The Warden chairs the Academic Board, and the Pro-Warden (Academic) now has

extensive oversight, as chair, of the key committees responsible for quality and standards, including the Academic Committee (of which the Pro-Wardens for Students and Research are also members); the College Board of Examiners; the Programme Approval and Review Sub-Committee (PARSC), (a sub-committee of the Academic Committee); and the Learning and Teaching Committee, chaired until 2002 by the Pro-Warden (Students). The SED stated that the Pro-Warden (Academic) is 'ideally positioned' to ensure the appropriate linkages across these committees. At the same time, however, the arrangement narrows the area of executive accountability for the oversight of quality and standards. Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the College's quality assurance system and its constituent procedures is the stated responsibility of the QAO, which is primarily responsible also for their development and operation. There is a risk under these arrangements, the audit team believed, of a narrow view being taken of the system and of a lack of broader ownership, this is an aspect that the College is advised to revisit.

31 A key step in the College's management of quality was the reconstitution, in 2003, of the Quality Affairs (formerly Quality Audit) Office. The rationale for change places a new emphasis on quality assurance 'as a basis for enhancement' and 'facilitation and support' for those involved in maintaining and improving the quality of learning and teaching. There is close liaison between the QAO and the Learning and Teaching Office (LTO) (see paragraph 36 below). Given the extent of the responsibilities and functions devolved to academic departments, the College recognised the need to strengthen central oversight of the departments' conduct of institutional quality assurance processes. Over the recent period, the QAO has played a coordinating role on a number of fronts and, in particular, has overseen the introduction of new procedures such as annual and periodic programme review (see paragraphs 50 and 53 below); liaised with academic departments, their committees, and departmental administrators over new

procedures; provided revised documentation on institutional procedures as well as staff development extending to collaborative arrangements. The quality assurance procedures are set out in a Quality Handbook (2004-05). A further document, Procedures for the Proposal of New Programmes of Study, contains, inter alia, the regulatory framework and information on programme specifications.

32 In the course of its meetings and through its reading of documentation, the audit team learned that the QAO is a critical element in the College's development of a robust and unified quality assurance system and of a constructive interface between the centre and the departments. The team would wish, therefore, both to record as an instance of good practice the initiatives of the QAO in developing the College's quality agenda. This includes staff development extending to collaboration with partner institutions (see paragraph 118 below), and to advise the College to provide, on a continuing basis, such support for the QAO enabling it to ensure the College's quality assurance processes become fully embedded within departments.

33 Departmental administrators play a vital role in the operation of the College's quality assurance procedures at departmental level and also contribute to their development and refinement. They provide continuity and consistency in their support for heads of department (who are appointed on a rotating basis), sharing a common job description which allows also for departmental variations. Regular minuted meetings, with action plans, are held between the QAO and departmental administrators which are a conduit for dissemination of good practice in each direction and also between departments. There are similar regular meetings convened with departmental administrators by the Registry. These various processes of interchange and the proactive commitment shown by departmental administrators to the enhancement of the student experience represent, in the audit team's view, instances of good practice.

34 The regulatory framework for the College's programmes of study, contained within the General Regulations and Codes of Practice for Students and the Programme Regulations, has been the subject of extensive review. This was conducted in the light of recommendations made by the QAA audit report of 2002 and of the Academic Infrastructure. The revised regulatory framework was approved by the Academic Board in June 2004 for implementation in 2005-06. Key aspects of the new framework include: the establishment of a unified assessment regime; mapping between course and programme learning outcomes and a requirement that all specified programme learning outcomes be achieved; and the introduction of generic grading criteria, on to which subject-specific criteria can be mapped, in order to promote harmonisation of practice and standards, as well as transparency. The College is now in the course of developing a postgraduate taught provision regulatory framework which, when in place, should facilitate institutional evaluation of student achievement and standards across departments (see paragraph 61 below).

35 The College's engagement in collaborative partnerships is at present limited to the validation of a College Diploma in Art Psychotherapy offered by two institutes in Germany and Switzerland respectively. Art Psychotherapy falls within the Department of Professional and Community Education (PACE), which also offers the Diploma award. The validated programmes are said by the College to replicate in all essentials this internal provision. The administration of the programmes is undertaken by a Departmental Programme Coordinator and the Departmental Administrator, with oversight by the Head of Department. The College's internal quality assurance arrangements, including programme monitoring, course evaluation and reporting by external examiners, apply to the collaborative programmes. Annual Programme Review (APR) is in the process of being introduced, and the collaborative partnerships are to be subject to periodic review later in 2005. Institutional responsibility for assuring quality and standards in collaborative

provision rests, as for internal programmes, with the Academic Committee, on behalf of the Academic Board. Oversight of collaborative provision is informed by reference to the *Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA. Evidence available to the audit team indicated that progress was being made by the College in developing and embedding quality assurance processes in its partner institutions, although key concerns relating to the assurance of standards remained to be satisfied (see paragraphs 116 to 120 below).

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

36 The SED provided by the College stated that it 'believes that learning and teaching development and enhancement lies at the heart of its approach to the assurance of quality and standards.' In the relevant section of the SED the College included in its future plans for enhancement: the continued development of the work of, and relationship between, the realigned QAO and LTO. This latter office being now expected to 'act as the focus for the promotion of learning and teaching within the College and as an initial liaison point with the learning and teaching community'. In support of this the College has also appointed an additional administrative staff member to support the efforts of the Head of the LTO to 'concentrate on Policy development, and on securing the co-operation of key players within the College'. These include the Learning Technology Officer, the Head of Training and Development, the Director of Professional Development, the Lecturer in Study Support Skills, the Disability Officer, the Deputy Academic Registrar and the Widening Participation Co-ordinator. In cooperation with such colleagues the Head of the LTO has formulated a revised Learning and Teaching strategy in support of professional standards. They are engaged in revising the staff development programme with suggestions on how academic staff may become involved in

LTO activities being an additional area under consideration. The efforts being made to ensure the progression of these areas were confirmed in discussions the team held with staff of both the LTO and the QAO.

37 The College also looks upon its evolving learning and teaching strategy as a source of enhancement opportunities, with the newly introduced departmental learning and teaching committees, and their link to the College equivalent. This is expected to bring positive enhancements in quality and standards over and above those arising from previous arrangements. The SED claimed that the changes, including the membership of the chairs of departmental learning and teaching committees on the reconstituted College Committee and the virtual learning environment (VLE) site for them, were already having a positive effect on how learning and teaching concerns are perceived and dealt with in departments. An expected origin for further enhancement activity is the anticipated longer term benefit of the departmental learning and teaching strategies.

38 Heads of department and others informed the team that both the College's quality policy/strategy and its enhancement strategy were embedded in the institutional learning and teaching strategy and its strategic plan. Staff were not able to identify evidence on the effectiveness of this approach, which is based on only recently completed institutional documents, except to indicate that the engagement of staff in the operation of the College's quality assurance processes, such as the APR was considered to be on 'a rising curve'.

39 In relation to the development of departmental learning and teaching strategies the audit team was able to confirm that progress was being made in their formulation, but that the demonstrable effect they may have on enhancement was still considered to be prospective by staff. Staff, however, indicated that departmental learning and teaching strategies were designed to address the themes arising from the College's strategy.

40 An expected opportunity for enhancement, through the Centre for Excellence in Learning Technology (CELT), was identified by the SED. This Centre has been the locus of a variety of projects, including 17 fellowship projects in 2004-05, with an enhancement purpose, of which the launch of the College's VLE (learn.gold) is a prominent example. The assessment of the enhancements achieved from such initiatives remains to be undertaken.

41 Although the SED identified a variety of library and computing services initiatives, these were presented as developments in service, with the enhancement they might bring to either learning and teaching or quality and standards not being identified. The SED also highlighted the recent developments in the College's estate without identifying how the management of this infrastructure contributed to the quality of the student experience and its future enhancement.

42 Throughout the SED the College identified a wide range of recent and/or ongoing changes/developments which may articulate with enhancement to quality and standards, but in general it did not highlight their actual or potential impact in that context.

43 From the meetings held at briefing and during the audit, the team found that it was too early in the life of the academic strategy (March 2005) to demonstrate anything other than intentions in relation to enhancement. This was also confirmed through the views on this link expressed by staff. The perceived lack of prioritisation in the delivery of the College's mission demonstrated in discussions with senior staff indicated a lack of strategic planning with regard to enhancement and an uncertainty on a clear definition of enhancement in the particular institutional context.

44 Although the audit team heard about a range of initiatives that might be anticipated to have enhancement intentions, and of those where such dividend had been achieved, in its consideration of the SED and its discussions with staff, the team found systematic descriptions, of how good practice was captured and shared in

a way that ensured that enhancement gains had impact across the College's full range of provision, lacking. It was also difficult for the team to discern from its meetings with staff whether the College was able to clearly identify the locus of responsibility for the management of enhancement, this being variously assigned by a range of parties with whom the team met. In addition, although the distinction between the responsibilities of the LTO and the QAO were well understood by those offices, the expectations placed upon the new consolidated APR process by most parties in relation to its capacity to deliver both assurance and enhancement outcomes for the College, remains to be demonstrated.

45 The audit team, however, considered that the contribution of the regular and ongoing meetings between the QAO, the Registry and departmental administrators demonstrated a strong commitment from the parties, clarifying how the operation of institutional processes, systematically at departmental level, can contribute to continuous improvement at all levels.

46 From its consideration of both institutional and departmental documentation, and its discussions with a wide range of relevant staff, it was clear to the audit team that a considerable level of activity with enhancement potential was ongoing in the College and that much of this was demonstrable in departments. However, the College was not able to demonstrate the effectiveness with which good practice was shared or to indicate a systematic strategic approach, thus leading the team to consider it desirable that the College should articulate a clearer and more strategic formulation of its intentions for enhancement.

Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

Programme approval

47 The SED stated that the programme approval process is designed to ensure that proposed new programmes are considered in the light of both academic and resource criteria. The procedures are set out in the

Quality Handbook. The Programme Approval Handbook provided a more detailed account of the early stages of the approval sequence. Departmental proposals for new programmes are submitted to the Pro-Warden (Academic), who considers planning and resource implications in consultation with the Director of Resources and Planning and the head of department. Some proposals may be referred at this stage to the Warden and SMT if there is a significant extra resource needed. Where a proposal is approved for development, it is submitted to the Programme Approval and Review Sub-Committee (PARSC), established in 2002, which reports to the Academic Committee. The academic documentation required includes: a programme specification; outlines of new and existing courses; programme regulations; details of teaching staff; and readers' reports, with responses to these. A budget analysis is also submitted. Guidance is available on the preparation of documents from the Deputy Academic Registrar and the Curriculum Maintenance Officer. A departmental representative attends the meeting of PARSC at which the proposal is considered. The readers' reports 'represent a fundamental reference point for the PARSC since members rely on them for guidance in a field of which they may have little direct knowledge'. It is the responsibility of the head of department to appoint two readers, normally senior academics, both of whom should be external to the department and at least one external to the College. The Procedures document specifies a list of matters on which readers, who receive all PARSC documentation, 'should be invited to comment', including the relevant facets of the Academic Infrastructure. Departments are required to account for their responses to these reports. If PARSC recommends approval of the proposal, it is sent to the Academic Committee, and thence to the Academic Board for final approval. Decisions on whether a programme may run in the following year are taken by the Planning Committee. From September 2004 the College has clarified the procedures relating to major and minor amendments to programmes. The section of

the *Code of practice* relating to programme approval has been considered by PARSC and the Academic Committee.

48 The SED commented on the improvement in the quality of written submissions made to PARSC as a consequence of the introduction of programme specifications as the principal approval text. The audit team noted the emphasis placed also on the role of specialist readers' reports. However, the team considered it desirable for the College to consider enhancing the approval procedure by the direct involvement of specialist externals in the final stage of consideration through attendance at PARSC's discussion of a proposal (see also paragraph 56 below). The team noted also the absence from the Quality Handbook and the Procedures document of any reference to conditions of approval or of mechanisms for ensuring compliance. This was a matter referred to in the QAA overseas quality audit report of December 2002, which had been unable to find evidence of the formal consideration by the Academic Committee of the satisfaction of conditions listed in a College validation report. The team could find no mention in the extant Quality Handbook, either in the section on Approval of a New Programme of Study or in the section on Collaborative Provision, of conditions or associated procedures, and that the College was strongly encouraged to clarify its policy in this area.

Programme monitoring and annual review

49 The SED and the Quality Handbook stated that programme monitoring forms an important part of the College's quality assurance and enhancement procedures, enabling students to feed back to their department on a range of issues, specifically: learning and teaching; learning support services; programme and course administration; and student support and guidance. Programme monitoring is effected through the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) meetings, usually held twice a year. College templates have been devised for PMC agendas and minutes. The committee consists of a programme monitor who acts as chair and is

not normally a teacher on the programme, members of the programme teaching staff, and student representatives. Minutes are submitted to departmental learning and teaching committees and departmental boards. They are also put on departmental notice boards and the departmental website, by which latter means the College hopes to expedite communication and feedback on matters brought forward by PMCs. This initiative has been developed in partnership with the Students' Union, which has its own input of issues from student feedback through the Students' Union Advice Centre. The SED stated the College's intention to extend the web-based database to include programme feedback from all sources including external examiners' reports and annual and periodic review. The minutes of PMC meetings held during the academic year provide the basis for the Programme Monitor's annual report. Issues raised there are monitored and progressed by the QAO. A copy of the report is passed to the Programme Convenor, for response within the APR.

50 APR is a new development in the College's quality assurance arrangements, having been piloted in 2003-04 and applied to all programmes from 2004-05. A main purpose is to combine the range of monitoring and evaluative aids, such as programme monitoring, course questionnaires, external examiners' reports, and student data, in a cohesive review of the teaching and operation of a programme over the preceding year. The review report, prepared by the programme leader, is sent to departmental learning and teaching committees and the QAO. The SED stated that the further dissemination of the report was still under consideration. The Quality Handbook, however, was more specific and indicates that minuted discussion of the reports by departmental learning and teaching committees will be made available to students via both their representatives on these committees and the internet. It also states that departmental learning and teaching committees will produce departmental summary reports of issues emerging from the annual review process for onward reference to the QAO, Learning and Teaching Committee,

PARSC and Academic Committee. The Quality Manual provides a flowchart for APR which completes the loop back to PMCs and students.

51 APR has not yet completed its first full cycle, and its unfamiliarity to staff was apparent to the audit team, not least in respect of its reporting lines out of departments into the centre and then back again to programme level. At the same time, staff informed the team that the monitoring processes within annual review were of long standing departmentally, although there were diverse practices responding to departmental needs and circumstances. It is intended by the College that cumulative annual reviews will inform the process of periodic programme review, also of recent date. The section of the *Code of practice* relating to programme monitoring and review has been considered by the Academic Committee. The audit team considered it advisable to encourage the College in its stated intention to review the programme monitoring and review system following its first year of operation, with particular reference to its embedding at both departmental and central levels.

Periodic programme/departmental review

52 The new process of periodic programme/departmental review was introduced in 2003-04, its methods designed to reflect external developments in quality assurance. The preceding arrangements focused on departmental strategy and planning, which have been incorporated into the College's new strategic planning process overseen by the SMT. The broad aim of the new process is 'to review the appropriateness and effectiveness of the learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment strategies of a programme or programmes beyond the annual programme reporting cycle and to ensure that College and Departmental quality assurance mechanisms are functioning effectively and efficiently'.

53 Periodic reviews are organised by QAO on behalf of the Academic Committee. The review is based on an SED and supporting evidence from the department. The scope of the review and membership of the review panel are

determined by the Pro-Warden (Academic) in consultation with the department and the Head of Quality Affairs. The panel includes two external reviewers in the relevant subject area(s) and senior academics from other departments in the College. Having met staff and students during a one-day event, the panel provides oral feedback followed by a written report which, after departmental comment, is submitted to the Academic Committee. An action plan is then agreed with the department and progress is monitored by QAO and reported to the Academic Committee.

54 The process was used in a range of departments in its first year and has been employed also in a joint review of the University of London External Programme in Computing (see paragraph 103 below). It was to be used also during 2005 in institutional reviews of provision for postgraduate research students and of collaborative provision. The SED stated that departmental feedback on the process had been 'generally very positive'. The evidence seen by the audit team indicated that the process is vital and robust and likely to make a significant contribution to the College's quality assurance system.

External participation in internal review processes

55 The SED indicated that proposed new programme documentation is considered by two 'readers', one of whom must be external to the College and one internal to the College but external to the department. It is the responsibility of heads of department to ensure that comments arising from these readers are given due consideration and appropriate responses incorporated into programme proposals. Final proposals are considered by PARSC which has, among the documents available to it, the readers comments which the SED indicated are a key reference point for the subcommittee where specific field-related direct knowledge may not be represented. In terms of programme review, the new process of periodic programme/departmental review, introduced as a development from a previous process,

involves two 'external reviewers' who are members of the review panel established for each review by the Academic Committee. Although the SED did not contain a reflection on the perceived effectiveness of this external involvement in internal review processes, from its consideration of approval and review documentation the team concluded there was no indication that the College was less than satisfied with the scale and nature of the participation of such externals.

56 Consideration of the approval and review documentation revealed to the audit team that the processes were in general carried out in line with the relevant procedural documentation. However, in relation to the new programme approval process it was clear to the team that the involvement of external readers made a significant and useful impact on the developmental process leading to the finalisation of programme documentation for approval. However, there was no contribution from persons outside the College to the final approval decision reached by PARSC and which is then referred on to the Academic Committee/Board. The team considered it desirable for the College to consider enhancing the involvement of external peers in the final approval of new academic programmes.

57 The consideration of periodic review documentation undertaken by the audit team confirmed the involvement of panel members external to the College in the operation of the current periodic programme/departmental review process, which itself made a reliable and appropriate contribution to the monitoring of quality and standards of the College's provision at departmental level.

External examiners and their reports

58 The SED stated that the 'External Examiner plays the key role in the assurance of standards of awards by providing an external peer view of the achievement of students'. The Quality Handbook (2004-2005) stated that 'Oversight and response to issues raised by (inter alia) External Examiners is, in the first instance, the responsibility of the relevant department: the

Head of department, the Departmental Board and the department's Learning and Teaching Committee'. The description also stated that 'Any issues that departments are unable to resolve themselves are passed to the relevant office or committee and the role of the QAO is to track the progress of these and ensure the responses are reported back to students via departments'. Although, the generality of this was confirmed by the team, it was less clear that the responses from departments to issues raised by external examiners' reports were specifically reported back to students. However, it was clear that by their membership of certain departmental committees students may become aware of such issues and responses.

59 External examiners and intercollegiate examiners (from other Schools of the University of London) are appointed by the Academic Board on the recommendation of the Chair of the College Board of Examiners. Nominations are made by heads of department, with advice from the Departmental Board, using a nomination form which requires information on the qualifications and previous relevant experience and concurrent examinerships from the nominee. The Aims of External Examiners, as set out in the Quality Handbook, are to: 'review, evaluate and moderate examinations and other assessment methods; ensure the consistency and comparability of academic standards by reviewing and evaluating the assessment process and by moderating assessed work on a sampling basis, ensure the decision making process at Sub-Boards and Joint Sub-Boards is fair and consistent, and to provide a report on the standards of student attainment and the validity, reliability and integrity of the assessment process'. The template for the External Examiners' Report, which has undergone iterative and beneficial annual updating, provided the opportunity for all the relevant matters referred to above to be addressed. The report template provided to external examiners does not however make reference to the Academic Infrastructure or its component parts. In addition, on appointment, each external examiner is provided, by the

College, with the 'Guidelines for External and Intercollegiate Examiners', the general and specific regulations relating to the programme(s) of study, together with the relevant scheme of marking and the annual report form. There is also a requirement for each new external examiner to receive a copy of the most recent outgoing External Examiners' Report. Departments liaise directly with external examiners in relation to the practical aspects of meeting dates and the provision of examination papers and scripts. The training of external examiners was indicated by the SED to be an area for further development, but specific plans were not mentioned.

60 The College operates a two-tier examination system where examination boards for programmes in departments are sub-boards of examiners, reporting to the College Board of Examiners. The Terms of Reference for the College Board indicates its delegated responsibilities with respect to the examination of all award bearing programmes (with the exception of MPhil/PhD). The chairs and members of sub-boards are appointed by the Academic Board and report to the College Board rather than their departments. The sub-boards, including external examiners, consider individual marks profiles and determine interim results and recommend final degree results to the College Board for ratification. This latter Board was said by the SED to 'ensure consistency in degree classification'. Over the last two years sub-boards have also been required to report to the College Board on the examination process, student performance and any trends therein, statistical analysis of performance, plagiarism and the evaluation of any innovations or future plans. External examiners, in addition to attending their relevant examination sub-board or joint sub-board are invited to attend the meeting of the College Board of Examiners, although are under no obligation to do so. Indeed, discussion with the senior staff and a full consideration of the relevant documentation confirmed that external examiners did not, normally, attend the College Board.

61 Although the documentation available to the audit team confirmed the comprehensive coverage by the College Board of awards made in respect of undergraduate provision, it was less clear how taught postgraduate awards were considered. Indeed, the Board's minutes demonstrated uncertainty with respect to the inclusion of master's programmes in its considerations when it expressed the need for a consistent structure and regulations for postgraduate taught programmes (an issue also identified by QAO for continued development). The College Board documentation provided no evidence that the output from master's programme sub-boards came to it and the record of its considerations did not demonstrate explicitly how it maintained comparability across the awards it considered. In addition, heads of department indicated that where joint programmes were concerned it was at the level of joint sub-boards that issues of comparability were reconciled between participating departments. It was difficult for the team therefore to identify how the role of the Board in ensuring consistency of degree classifications could be demonstrated convincingly, and that it provided additional assurance with respect to the standards of awards over and above that provided by the sub-boards at which external examiners were present.

62 The annual written report produced by external examiners is addressed to the Warden of the College care of the Deputy Academic Registrar's Office. Reports are read in the Deputy Academic Registrar's Office and sent to the appropriate head of department for consideration by the department and Chair of the Examination Sub-Board. If reports raise issues of a serious nature they are referred to the Pro-Warden (Academic) and Academic Registrar for urgent consideration. Within departments, reports are considered in Departmental Board, the Learning and Teaching Committee, PMCs and as part of the APR. The process of consideration was confirmed during the DAT investigations undertaken by the team.

63 Responses to external examiners' reports, endorsed by the head of department, are

prepared by either the Chair of the Examination Sub-Board, the programme coordinator or the head of department themselves and then returned by the head of department to the Deputy Academic Registrar's Office, and transmitted to the Pro-Warden (Academic) for scrutiny in the QAO. Subject to the satisfaction of the QAO, responses are sent to external examiners by the Deputy Academic Registrar's Office. The operation of this process for the provision of responses to external examiners' reports was confirmed by the audit team through its DATs.

64 The QAO prepares an annual Digest of External Examiners' Reports which the SED indicated was considered in detail by the Academic Committee, where recommendations, usually to the College Board of Examiners, are made. The Digest is then referred to the Academic Board for consideration and approval, following which it is sent to all external examiners and to the University of London where it forms part of the Annual Report to the Federal University. Internally, the Annual Digest in more recent years has provided aspects of an action agenda for the Academic Board with some evidence being available which indicates that relevant issues have remained under consideration.

65 Although currently the subject of review, the audit team was able to access sufficient evidence to demonstrate that external examiner reporting was a feature of the College's collaborative provision, and that the quality and standards of awards was endorsed by the external examiners. The Examination Board processes were receiving direct local input from the QAA, and it was clear to the team that the College's approach to this aspect of securing the standards of its award was receiving serious and ongoing attention both in Bern and Berlin.

66 The consideration of external examiners' reports are included as requirements in both APR and Periodic Programme/Departmental Review, and are part of the evidence base considered by the panels set up to consider the output of the latter, evidence for which was made available to the team through its DAT consideration.

67 From its considerations of DAT-related documentation the audit team was able to discern that, in operation, the external examiner system of the College adhered to the precepts of the relevant section of the *Code of practice*, and the departments engaged with and responded appropriately to the comments they received from their external examiners. It was also clear, from the external examiner reports seen, that the standards of awards were fully endorsed and that external examiners addressed themselves to their roles in assuring the quality of provision.

68. In relation to external examiner reports received in respect of University of London research degree awards, the audit team was assured that in addition to the assurance role played by the Federal University in the award of such degrees, all reports were provided to the Research Office. Here they were considered by the Chair of the Postgraduate Research Committee and any matters of concern taken up informally with the head of the department concerned.

External reference points

69 The SED indicated that in 2001 the Academic Committee established a Quality and Standards Working Party in order to assess progress and coordinate work in relation to the emerging Academic Infrastructure. Through this body and through its successor, the Programme Specification Working Party, emphasis was placed on the development of programme specifications which were primarily addressed to, and a source of information for, students. The approach was said by the SED to take account of the learning outcomes approach, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) level descriptors and subject benchmark statements, and was expected to lead to completion of specifications for all programmes by May 2003. The evidence available to the audit team helped to confirm that this expectation had been, substantially, satisfied. The Programme Specification Working Party also established programme specifications as core documents for the processes of

programme approval and review before handing back responsibility for monitoring the application of the Academic Infrastructure to the Academic Committee, which has the oversight of policy on quality and standards. Senior staff, in discussion with the team, however, identified that the management of engagement with the Academic Infrastructure was via the QAO. However in discussion with a wide range of institutional staff the more general ownership of these matters across the College was clearly demonstrated.

70 The SED claimed that the FHEQ has informed the production of programme specifications, the review of undergraduate and postgraduate frameworks and the College's continuing work on levels. The latter including the proposed revision by the QAO of the course outline/specification template in order to enable the updating of all course information in a format compatible with programme specifications and the clear articulation of level.

71 Comprehensive guidance on the preparation of programme specifications is included in the Quality Handbook 2004-05 where prospective authors of such documents are advised to consult the relevant QAA web-based advice and to take account of the FHEQ. The SED indicated that the QAA *Code of practice* sections 'are the responsibility of the appropriate policy committee and executive offices and officers.' It also indicated that progress against the guidance in the *Code of practice* is monitored as appropriate by the QAO reporting to the Academic Committee. The most recent evidence of this was the March 2005 overview of the institutional position with respect to the Code provided to the Academic Board by QAO. This mapping document identifies the College's current adherence and identifies actions taken, and to be taken, and by whom. Policy issues arising from the section on Assessment of Students are under consideration by the Learning and Teaching Committee, and procedural matters by the College Board of Examiners.

72 Although mention of the *Code of practice* and other aspects of the Academic Infrastructure was made in support of the introduction of certain processes and practices, the SED did not link the Infrastructure into its description of Programme Approval, APR or Periodic Review/Departmental Review processes. Neither did the supporting documents for such processes, for example, the programme Approval Covering Template, make reference to the Academic Infrastructure or its components. Neither did the SED indicate that a systematic approach or review of adherence has taken place College wide in relation to the implementation and impact of the elements making up the Academic Infrastructure. However, recent documentation received by the Academic Committee indicated a mapping of the *Code of practice* with institutional procedures. The engagement of staff with the Academic Infrastructure was explored in the DATs and there appeared to be an understanding of its contribution to the establishment of how expectations of quality and standards can be defined and addressed.

Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies

73 The SED indicated that reports from developmental engagements (DE) were considered by the Academic Committee and the Academic Board with departments being requested to provide responses to the DE reports and what actions resulted. An analysis of the recommendations and actions taken in the case of the DEs in Sociology, English and Comparative Literature, and Computing was provided by the QAO and this showed that, although some actions had been taken, many remained as components of the work in progress in the College in relation to: its Committee Review; the developing role and impact of the QAO; its response to the requirements of TQI; the work of Learning and Teaching (LT) Fellows; and curriculum mapping etc. Indeed the SED also identified the newly reconstituted LTO as the expected agency through which a number of the issues raised will be progressed.

74 In terms of the College's collaboration provision, the review of Overseas Collaborative Provision (2002), the QAO document referred to above claimed that collaborative provision procedures are to be revised in light of the new *Code of practice* section. However the SED did not mention this in the specific section dedicated to collaborative provision. The major activity appearing to arise from the 2002 report of this collaborative provision has included the recent direct contact the QAO has had with the collaborative partner, and the expected review of the programme in Autumn 2005 as part of the contract renewal process (due 2006).

75 The SED stated that the College seeks external input and external links as appropriate in all areas of standards assurance and includes within its associated list of exemplars; 'the engagement with Professional and Statutory Bodies in the guarantee of the standards of its vocationally and professionally oriented activities'. The SED also described how 'significant areas of the College's provision are accredited by external bodies, the main being the TTA [Teacher Training Agency], given that Goldsmiths is one of the largest providers of teacher education in the country'. The College also provided a table of all its accredited programmes which identifies at least eight different agencies involved in the accreditation of aspects of its provision.

76 Although the SED claimed that the QAO has 'become increasingly involved in providing support for accreditation events' it does not refer to the quality framework in which this occurs except to indicate that all reports are held centrally and submitted to the Academic Committee. The SED accepted that 'it has to be acknowledged that this procedure has not been followed systematically in recent years and is now being reapplied'. It was not clear from the SED what the institutional process for responding to such external accreditation reports might be. Indeed in discussion with a number of staff groups a systematic description of the College requirements with respect to accreditation and its related activities did not emerge.

77 In its DAT investigations in two specific areas (see paragraphs 149 and 161 below), the audit team became aware of evidence that at departmental level the engagement with the inputs into, and the reports arising from, accreditation activities was both conscientious and effective. Positive outcomes arose which were beneficial both to the relevant provision and to students pursuing such provision. The documentation arising from the accrediting bodies and the reports on local provision they produced were considered with ample rigour within the departments. However, in neither case could a clear and systematic link be forged with institutional level considerations. Indeed staff in general were unclear of what such considerations might entail. It was clear that heads of departments and others considered any responses to accreditation reports to be wholly a matter for departmental determination, although it was becoming evidence that QAO could play a useful advisory role.

78 In regard of the current relatively limited involvement of the College in these accreditation matters the team formed the view that there would be benefit in finding opportunities to develop methods for the sharing of advice and good practice arising from accreditations.

Student representation at operational and institutional level

79 Goldsmith's College Students' Union (GCSU) has four full-time elected representatives who are sabbatical officers. These full-time officers have presence on College committees including the Academic Board and Council. Following the recent Committee Review, student representatives on College Committees from 2005-06 have been extended to include the College Board of Examiners (but not for any business where degree awards to individual student cases are considered); Finance and Resources Committee; Learning and Teaching Committee; Postgraduate Research Committee (PRC); Programme Approval and Review Sub-Committee. Student membership of the Governance Committee and the Honorary

Degrees and Fellowships Committee were awaiting formal approval by the Council at the time of the audit visit.

80 At departmental level students are represented at Programme Monitoring Meetings which meet once a term. These meetings bring together student representatives for each year of a programme with a member of staff who is nominated as programme monitor to discuss issues of relevance or concern. Copies of the report, which are agreed by all those present, are sent to the head of department and to the College QAO. Issues arising from these meetings are taken forward to the Department Board. There is an annual Programme Monitor's Report indicating issues raised; action required action taken; outcome for the PRC; and this is attached to the APR Report. PRC Annual Reports for some programmes are accessible on the VLE.

81 The Students' Union considers representation to be central to its own strategic plan 'to provide opportunities for student opinion and actively represent the interests of its members, acting as a channel of communication in dealing with the College and other external bodies'. The survey carried out by the Students' Union, to inform the SWS, suggested that 'there is clearly provision for students to make their voice heard in the College, whether through formal or informal methods'.

82 The Students' Union produces a very useful Programme Monitoring Representative Handbook. In addition to the Handbook and in conjunction with the College, the Students' Union delivers training to programme monitoring representatives. These representatives are 'responsible for actively gauging the views of students on their programme and department and presenting student opinion to programme committees or to the Students' Union Executive Committee'.

83 The audit team found evidence of student representation at institutional and programme level in four DATs covered in this audit. The absence of student representation at department level on Learning and Teaching

Committees was noted. Students who met the audit team as part of the DATs generally expressed satisfaction with the operation of the Programme Monitoring Meetings as a mechanism for raising student concerns. There was also, however, evidence that programme monitoring in joint programmes had not always taken place. The team saw evidence of the effectiveness of student representation in a number of areas including: the piloting of new opening hours for the library; the holding of evening meetings of PMC in the Education Department to facilitate student attendance; the re-introduction of a staff-student forum in the Anthropology department to encourage contributions from the student body. The provision for student representation was further supported in the SWS. There was also evidence in the DATs that students appreciated the formal and informal arrangements for student representation at programme level.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

84 The College considers that student feedback is an integral input to the quality assurance process and this is collected via several routes: PMC meetings with student representation; course evaluation forms and by student representation on departmental and College committees. The QAO works closely with the Students' Union in ensuring feedback mechanisms are working effectively. The Information Service monitors feedback from students and posts its responses through feedback boards in the library.

85 The survey carried out by the Students' Union to inform the SWS suggested that while students do have opportunities to offer feedback they are critical about what happens to feedback. The SWS suggested that departments acting on and reporting back on student feedback is among the key areas for development. The students insist that 'effective systems of feedback are essential'. The audit team noted that while acting on and reporting back on feedback may be variable, the systems in place for student representation were, in general, effective.

86 Goldsmith's offers a range of programmes, many of which have a professional or vocational focus. The SED highlighted that in a significant number of areas the College enjoys strong ties with employers working in the relevant occupational fields. It also stated that links with employers are also cultivated through placement schemes offered in a number of College departments. For example, in the Department of Professional and Continuing Education, Programme Advisory Committees include employers' representatives who contribute to the design and delivery of the programmes. It has a regular Stakeholders Committee Meeting with representatives of various London Boroughs, with clear strategic aims including the building of links with stakeholder partners that provide practice placements for students and to enable and develop service user involvement in the Stakeholders' Committee. In programmes that work closely with professional and statutory regulatory bodies or other professional associations they rely on their requirements to inform curriculum development. In some departments visiting tutors are themselves practitioners and where this happens it was considered by the audit team to be beneficial to the programmes.

87 Enhancing employability is an important part of the College's learning and teaching strategy. Learning and teaching representatives in each department help to ensure that programme specifications embed both subject specific and general transferable skills with the academic curriculum. Through the Careers Liaison Tutors Group, continual dialogue on employment-related issues is maintained between departments and the careers service. Both the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Careers Service advises departments on employment feedback, and this feedback can inform the development of learning outcomes in individual programmes.

88 The SED noted that while Departments maintain a range of contacts with graduates, there is no formal College policy or provision for collecting feedback from them. The appointment, however, of a new Director of

Development in summer 2004 has led to a wide-ranging review of alumni relations and the possibilities for communicating with and gaining feedback from graduates for a range of purposes.

Progression and completion statistics

89 Statistics on recruitment, progression, withdrawals, and degree classification are collected by the College and in some instances these have been analysed by gender; age; home region; ethnic origin; and disability. Progression requirements are set out in the general programme regulations. Some programmes also have specific requirements. Retention is identified as an important part of the College's learning and teaching strategy and this has led to close monitoring of retention rates at departmental and programme level. Departments are provided with standard data, by programme, but may also request further information to enable them to assess their progress in achieving strategic aims such as widening participation. One of the four stated aims of the APR is to comment on data on student progression, retention and completion. The SED stated that 'with the introduction of the new annual programme review process, departments are now provided with a standard set of data by programme on entry qualifications, progression, withdrawals and degree classification'. APRs include a brief commentary on the data and are also expected to analyse any trends. Data included in the APR are considered by departmental boards and learning and teaching committees. They are also passed to the College's Learning and Teaching Committee, the Academic Committee and the Academic Board, but it was unclear to the audit team how they are used to enable college-wide comparisons.

90 The SED contained a fairly short dedicated section on progression and retention but the subject is also mentioned in other parts of the document. The SED stated that in 2002 the College created a post of Data Analyst specifically charged with improving the quantity and quality of data concerning recruitment, admissions, and widening participation. It also stated that a firm of consultants was employed in 2004 to examine

recruitment data. However, it was acknowledged that there is still room for improvement in the level and scope of analytical data to underpin the recruitment and admission processes, and the relationships between programmes over time and across programmes within departments. The audit team gained the impression from discussion with heads of department that comparability of standards was perceived primarily in terms of external intra-subject comparisons, and that internal comparison across disciplines and, in particular, departments had less prominence. The team considered it advisable that, perhaps through the agency of the Board of Examiners, the College should consider further the efficacy of its current systems for ensuring the comparability of its awards across departments at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and that recent additions and amendments to the regulatory framework should help in this.

91 The SED suggested, and meetings with appropriate staff confirmed, that more use could be made of data to support and inform strategic decisions. The College is working to improve and develop the quality of its statistical information. It has, for instance, recently established a working group to consider progression, recruitment and retention. There is some evidence that data are linked to admission policies, and meetings with staff provided examples of where data have been used to help assure quality and standards. Meetings with staff indicated that not all departments are able to consider the same range of data, or provide the same amount of analysis. There are future plans to provide departments with comparative data and, 'to enable them to benchmark their performance in terms of completion, progress and retention.' The documentation provided to the audit team, and meetings with staff, at College and departmental level, indicated that the College is now making better use of statistical information. However, the College acknowledged there is still room for improvement in the use of data to inform strategic planning, and the evaluation of quality and standards.

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

92 The College's human resources strategy aims to ensure that the College has the right staff in terms of numbers, costs, skills, training, and experience at the right time and in the right place to deliver its mission. The SED claimed that the College has a rigorous process which is consistently implemented so as to ensure the best and most effective outcome in the recruitment of staff. The justification for filling or establishing every post is assessed by a senior level advisory group, which makes appropriate recommendations to the Warden. The College has improved its relocation package in order to aid recruitment of academic/senior staff and have been flexible in its remuneration policies in order to retain valuable staff.

93 Staff who are regularly involved in recruitment are identified and trained. At least three members of each recruitment panel are formally trained in selection skills. Chairs of panels have had specialist training for their role. Every shortlist for an academic appointment is assessed by the Pro-Warden (Research) to ensure that candidates have achieved, or have the potential to achieve, the required standards of research performance identified in the College's research strategy. Selection panels for academic posts are chaired either by the Warden or a Pro-Warden. Shortlisted candidates make a formal presentation to members of the department, whose views are then reported to the selection panel.

94 The College formulated recruitment and selection guidelines in 2004. To ensure consistency of practice and a planned approach, the Personnel Department administers all recruitment and selection exercises. A personnel representative also attends a pre meeting to provide a briefing to the selection panel. Heads of department are automatically surveyed on the process and outcome of each recruitment process.

95 The SED stated that the College regards the probationary period as critical. The standard period in the University of London is three years

for academic probation. The scheme provides for an initial three-month report, followed by annual reports. The Probation Committee normally meets in the summer term. It is chaired by the Warden and decides on the progression, termination, extension or confirmation of probation in each case.

96 The performance review scheme emphasises the personal development of staff within the context of the objectives and strategic direction of the College. The annual appraisal, which takes place between July and October each year, is one of the main channels for collecting training needs. These training needs feed into the training and development programme for the next academic year. The performance review scheme is now under review and, following wide consultation, a pilot scheme is currently running in a number of academic and non-academic departments.

97 The SED explained the systems for promotion and reward. The promotion panels, chaired by the Warden, have clearly-defined remits for differing categories of staff, meet on an annual cycle with outcomes reported to the Council. Guidance notes and criteria for promotion are published on the internal network together with the appropriate forms. Since the last audit the College has reviewed in particular the criteria for promotion on the grounds of rewarding excellent teaching. The Promotions Committee has now applied this new criteria.

Assurance of the quality of teaching through staff support and development

98 To support the development of good practice in learning, teaching and assessment, the College provides a comprehensive continuing professional development programme for academics. This is through its own in-house provision and through collaboration with other staff development providers. This includes continuing to play an active role in the London University working group, which was established to share and disseminate good practice in staff development.

99 The staff Training and Development Unit (TDU) has a College-wide focus and designs and delivers customised development activities, provides general advice to individuals on continuing professional development and provides guidance to departments on the design and delivery of local staff development. Programmes are offered with a planned and bespoke approach to help staff develop within the College in order that, as far as possible, it achieves its future needs through quality human resources. The College encourages staff to engage professionally with their roles and supports applications for the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (HE Academy) membership and the Association of University Administrators membership, and engagement with Learning and Teaching Support Networks. The TDU aims to support the Learning and Teaching strategy in meeting the development needs of all academic staff. It also aims to provide staff with the opportunity to learn and reflect on learning, teaching and assessment issues and practices, including, where appropriate, the integration of new technology.

100 All probationary academic staff are provided with a mentor, chosen by their head of department. The role of the mentor is set out in the College's Guidelines for Mentors, and there is also an annual mentor-training workshop. All new staff that the audit team met expressed appreciation for the mentoring scheme. The College has an induction process for new staff, its aims are to smooth the preliminary stages of joining the College and the new department; to help the member of staff understand how the College operates; and to enable the new member of staff to fulfil their role effectively. The Academic Committee has recently recommended to the Academic Board that all new staff appointed to the College should be required to complete or be positively exempted from the new learning and teaching staff development programme, called the 'Postgraduate Certificate in the Management of Learning and Teaching', and that this should be incorporated within probation requirements and included within contracts.

101 The audit team noted the good practice of the Centre for Excellence in Learning Teaching Technology (CELT), which was established in 2001 to support College staff in their use of using all aspects of technology in their learning and teaching activities. The objectives of the Centre are to provide staff development for academic staff in using new technologies for learning and teaching; provide practitioners with access to a peer support group; enable the development of innovative learning and teaching strategies in a non-threatening environment; embed across the College a culture where excellence in learning and teaching is recognised as a worthwhile pursuit; encourage staff to undertake pedagogic research; and develop a network of staff across the College who possess skills in using new technology to promote learning and teaching are able to disseminate it within their departments. CELT Fellowships have been created to enable resources to be developed that involve the use of learning technology. They include some provision that allows departments to cover replacement costs of staff.

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

102 The College is the lead college for English and Computing in the External Programme of the University of London. The External Programme is an output-based model, in that standards are assured by the examination process, which is under the University of London's control.

Learning support resources

103 Information provided to auditors and meetings with staff confirmed that learning resource support planning is undertaken by the Finance and Resource Committee (FRC), which reports to the Council. The Communications and Information Policy Committee, a sub-committee of FRC, advises on policy and has developed a strategy that aims 'to promote the effective use of information resources', including the library, information technology (IT), human resources, and accommodation. Learning resource

provision is managed by Information Services, which includes, the Library, CELT, Computer Services, the Language Resource Centre and Media Services. Information Services has procedures for monitoring its services through feedback from users through information boards; an enquiry desk; and reports from the GCSU. Students are provided with a useful and user-friendly Information Service Handbook that covers the library, IT facilities and guidelines on using the College's VLE.

104 The Library has a clear and detailed strategic plan that encompasses expenditure, statistical analyses of user records, and action points with associated progress notes. Book stock has been increased and there has been a considerable expansion in WebCT. Induction to Information Services is provided to all new students and a study skills training programme is available throughout the year. Nevertheless, the opening hours of Rutherford Information Services Building (RISB), which offers access to the library and central computing services, remain a major concern for students. At the time of the audit, opening hours were extended for a six-week pilot through the intervention of the Senior Management Team. Whilst recognising the need to evaluate the pilot programme, the audit team were not made aware of any longer-term plans that addressed these concerns.

105 The College is proactive in the development of learning technologies as part of its learning and teaching and human resources strategies. In 2001, a Learning Technology Officer was appointed and the Centre for Excellence in Learning Technology was established. CELT has clear objectives and aims to embed learning technologies across all college provision. To this end, a successful CELT staff fellowship scheme and a VLE were established. The audit team noted that students were particularly appreciative of the learning opportunities provided by the VLE. The development of the VLE within departments is progressing, although, at present, use of the facility is variable.

106 The Accommodation Committee is responsible for monitoring the quality and provision of teaching accommodation and liaises with academic departments; it reports to the Finance and Resources Committee. The administration of accommodation is managed by the Estates Department, which is reviewed annually and receives, from academic departments and the QAO, feedback on its provision. The College acknowledges that there are concerns about the maintenance and allocation of teaching space which is being addressed through the Estates strategy. Investment has occurred with the current construction of the Ben Pimlott Building, which will serve the community and provide space for creative work between academic departments. At present, however, the quality of teaching accommodation is variable, with both staff and students noting concern with the ongoing problem.

107 The College recognises the individual strengths and weaknesses of its learning support provision. There have been some successful initiatives, investment has been made in IT provision and some expansion of teaching accommodation, and extended opening hours for RISB are being piloted. The audit team concluded, however, that there were some concerns that were not being dealt with in a timely fashion, and that the proliferation of responsibility for learning support resources across a range of committees and service departments was a contributing factor. The College did not provide the team with evidence of a clear and effective decision-making process to ensure that the learning resource infrastructure meets students' needs.

Academic guidance, support and supervision

108 Academic guidance is formally provided by the College via a personal tutor system. Each student is allocated a personal tutor and department heads are responsible for ensuring that regular meetings occur. The College has recognised that the implementation of its policy on personal tutoring has been variable, and a

working party was established to review the provision, and new guidelines and a personal tutor handbook are being produced. Students told the audit team that, at present, the personal tutor system remains variable across departments and that students are often more likely to seek academic support from departmental staff. Students affirmed that the academic support offered at departmental level was good. The College is currently conducting a limited pilot on Personal Development Planning (PDP) and, although students are aware of the new scheme, few had had experience of it.

109 The SWS indicated that the quality of feedback on assessed work was variable, particularly in master's programmes. In meetings with the audit team, students confirmed that feedback on assessment lacked consistency. This variability was reflected in the student work reviewed by the team, where both excellent and limited formative feedback was found.

110 The Postgraduate Research Committee (PGRC) oversees postgraduate provision in the College and reports to the Research Committee and ultimately to the Academic Board. From 2005-06 it will report to the Academic Committee. The PGRC provides general advice, a code of practice and regulatory requirements to departments and students. Formal examination requirements remain within the remit of the University of London, while the College ensures that it supports postgraduate students in effectively completing their degrees. The College has recently expanded its postgraduate provision and the PGRC has recognised the need for increased learning support and strong quality assurance processes to ensure its effectiveness.

111 The quality of postgraduate provision is ensured through a wide range of mechanisms that provide good opportunities for both staff and students to provide feedback. Academic supervision has been augmented by the provision of two supervisors for each student and by the formal mentoring and training of staff with no previous experience of supervision. Staff affirmed that these initiatives were now embedded at department level and were

working well. Students are further supported by two comprehensive handbooks, the first outlining college procedures and regulations and, the second, offering information on research and generic training.

112 Overall, the audit team concluded that academic support and guidance at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels was appropriate and effective. The College demonstrated that it was aware that the system was not always employed uniformly across departments and was acting in an appropriate manner to address this.

Personal support and guidance

113 Pastoral support for students is provided centrally by Student Services, which manages a wide range of services including careers; counselling; the Language Studies Centre; the International Office; and the Student Support Office that includes disability. These services work with academic departments in order to enhance the student learning experience. Student Services also incorporates, and liaises with, the Students' Union and departmental senior tutors. In order to ensure standards, each service monitors itself annually and reports to the Student Services Committee. It is intended that the individual service unit strategies align with the College plan, however, the audit team was not given evidence of a clear line of responsibility for ensuring the monitoring of service units and the enforcement of the strategies. Student Services has its own strategy that identifies action points and key areas for development. Information about individual services is published widely for staff and students via handbooks, web pages and a variety of induction programmes. In line with the College's widening participation strategy, Student Services aims to offer special support to students from non-traditional and overseas students via admissions, the LTO and the Language Studies Centre. A Disability Coordinator oversees provision for disabled students, and offers a wide range of support, particularly in identifying individual needs at admission.

114 At department level, pastoral support for students is provided primarily by a trained senior tutor, who identifies student needs, offers appropriate advice and monitors student progression. Departmental administrators also disseminate information to students and provide effective liaison with college support services. The audit team noted that pre-entry information, communicated via documentation and electronically, and departmental handbooks were generally clear and informative.

Collaborative provision

115 The College's collaborative provision is presently limited to the award of the Goldsmiths Postgraduate Diploma in Art Psychotherapy by the Institut für Transpersonale Psychotherapie und Kreative Kunsttherapie (ITP) in Bern-Lausanne and the Institut für Kunsttherapie in Berlin. Art Psychotherapy falls within the Department of Professional and Community Education (PACE), which runs its own internal Diploma programme and provides, through a programme coordinator and departmental administrator, the College's direct link with its partner institutions in Berlin and Bern. The Diploma programme is run also in French at L'École d'Études Sociales et Pédagogiques (EESP) in Lausanne under the general direction of ITP; the programmes at Bern and Lausanne are deemed to operate in broad conjunction, although taught and assessed in different languages. The Diploma programme at Bern was validated in 2001. The College had previously (from 1994) validated the Diploma at the Institut de Perfectionnement (INPER), Lausanne, which ceased trading in late 2001, leaving the College to discharge its responsibilities to students registered on the INPER programme. In November 2001 ITP Bern proposed to the College that ITP should both take on the ex-INPER students and continue to offer Art Psychotherapy in Lausanne via an increase in the intake permitted under the extant agreement. These proposals were endorsed by a College panel which visited Bern and Lausanne in April 2002 and later approved following consideration by the Academic

Committee and the Academic Board. The proceedings overlapped with a QAA audit of the collaboration with Bern which involved visits to both the College and Bern between March and May 2002 and raised a series of concerns relating to the establishment and maintenance of quality and standards.

116 The QAA report (December, 2002) expressed particular concern about 'the College's stewardship of the standards of its validated award', which was 'weakened by the limited information it receives relating to the comparison of the achievements of students at ITP with those completing a similar programme in the UK'. The report concluded 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 anxiety 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 (see paragraphs 48 and 56 above); programme monitoring; staff exchange and development; and information for students of the Institute concerning their status and rights. The present audit team sought to examine how these and other aspects of the College's responsibility for its collaborative arrangements have been and are being addressed.

117 The SED stated that the programmes in Germany and Switzerland are 'essentially the same as the internal programme'. Further, the College's internal quality assurance framework, including programme monitoring; external examiner reports, course evaluation, APR; and periodic programme review, applies equally to these programmes. A periodic review of the programmes is to be conducted in autumn 2005 as part of the contract renewal process. A paper from the QAO to the Academic Committee dated November 2004 summarised action taken at that point in response to the QAA audit of the collaborative partnership with Bern.

Key developments in response to the QAA audit of the collaborative partnership with Bern include: drafting in Berlin and Bern of programme specifications compatible with those operative at the College; attendance by the Head of Quality Affairs and other College staff during 2004 at academic conferences in Berlin and Bern to provide briefing and training on quality assurance procedures such as programme monitoring; improving formal communication channels and consultation on staff changes; and attempts to progress the concerns relating to assessment, external examining and comparability of standards. This last issue is contextualised by reference to the September 2004 edition of the *Code of practice, Section 2*, and observations on serial arrangements and language of study and assessment contained in its introduction. In respect of the quality of information provided for students, course documentation was reviewed during visits in 2004 and is to be considered within the forthcoming periodic review.

118 Academic and administrative staff attend annual conferences and sub-boards of examiners in Berlin and Bern, and College staff have begun to teach at the partner centres. The departmental administrator in PACE services all sub-boards of examiners and coordinates the annual marking exercise in liaison with the programme coordinator. Understanding of quality assurance processes, such as programme monitoring, has been taken forward by the Head of Quality Affairs in meetings with both staff and students. The initiatives being taken in staff development, with presentations at partner centres on the introduction of programme review and programme specifications, were considered by the audit team to represent good practice. In developing the utility of its quality assurance processes, 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. It may also wish to consider whether in the Quality Handbook, which at present addresses collaborative arrangements only up to the point

of their approval, there should not be a section concerned with the interface between the College and partner institutions in their compliance with the College's internal quality assurance mechanisms, such as APR.

119 In regard to academic standards, the audit team saw evidence of the initial drafting of programme specifications in both Berlin and Bern, and of the College's requirement that these should relate to subject benchmarks, the FHEQ and generic grading criteria. 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 whereby each of the four centres (including the College) will provide a small sample of work from the previous year for cross-marking by the others, the outcomes of which will be considered at the annual conference. While this seems a potentially useful initiative, it remained unclear to the audit team by whom translation would be undertaken and how this process itself would be secured. 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.

120 The audit team noted the uncertain future of the Lausanne programme, as conveyed in the minutes of the annual academic meeting held at Bern in September, 2004, in the light of staffing and communication difficulties. The minutes record a decision not to admit students in the current session 'whilst the programme settles down'. As there are continuing students at Lausanne, this is a matter the College is advised to monitor closely to ensure that the programme's quality and standards are maintained.

Section 3: The audit investigations: discipline audit trails

Discipline audit trails

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

Design

122 The DAT and additional material provided during the audit covered the range in design programmes provided by the Department of Design. The subject area was supported by a DSED that was prepared for the purposes of the audit and which concentrated on two programmes, BA (Hons) in Design and MA in Design Futures, as a means of exemplifying the Department's policies and processes in managing the quality and standards of its programmes. The DAT also included: the BA (Hons) degrees in Eco Design and the design component of the joint honours programme in Computing with Design for the World Wide Web; the MA programmes in Design Futures and Design - Critical Theory and Practice; and the MRes in Design.

123 The DSED was accompanied by detailed programme specifications that complied with the *Subject benchmark statement* for art and design, the relevant codes of practice, the FHEQ and the policies of the Department's and the College's learning and teaching committees. The aims and intended learning outcomes for all programmes are described clearly and in detail in the student handbooks and on the Department's web page. Module descriptors include intended learning outcomes and methods of assessment that correspond to the programme specifications. These have been mapped in more detail for the BA Design, a procedure that also provides a clear indication of progression through levels with regard to studio practice.

124 The DSED did not include progression and retention data, but an analysis of these were available to the audit team in Annual Programme Monitoring Reports. At departmental level, the senior tutor has overall responsibility for monitoring student progression and retention with information being submitted to the Department Learning and Teaching Committee.

125 The Department has not yet undergone the recently established college system of periodic review. However, BA Design was updated through previous college procedures by submission to PARSC in 2003 whereby all programmes were rewritten in line with the new College regulatory framework. Annual programme monitoring reports are considered by the Department Board, which reports to the Academic Board. The Department Board monitors a range of provision at departmental level, including: resources; external examiners' reports and responses to these by the Head of Department, and course evaluations. The Department's strategic plan provides an overview of provision that refers directly to College strategy and includes action plans for the coming year. In addition, the Department's Learning and Teaching Committee, which reports to the Department Board, provides more detailed reports on issues of annual programme monitoring. This includes students' comments; module evaluation; and data on student recruitment, progression, retention and completion. The Learning and Teaching Committee also devised and oversaw the implementation of the Department's learning and teaching strategy.

126 Student views are obtained through course questionnaires, trained student programme monitoring representatives who sit on a range of departmental committees, and a designated staff/student committee. In their meetings with the audit team students noted that issues raised about college provision have not been responded to in a timely fashion.

127 The Department ensures the enhancement of its own provision through a range of

processes, including, the new proactive learning and teaching strategy, staff appraisal, staff development activity and staff away days, as well as via an extensive range of external links within the discipline and design professionals nationwide.

128 External examiners consistently praise the quality of the provision and affirm that the standards achieved compare favourably with similar programmes nationwide. In particular, the MS Design Futures was commended as unique in the UK. External examiners also affirm that assessment processes are fair, thorough, well documented and diligently administered. The audit team saw evidence that action on matters raised by the external examiners' reports was timely and appropriate.

129 The Department's learning and teaching strategy covers assessment and is in line with College expectations and the *Code of practice* on assessment. Assessment criteria for all programmes are comprehensively described in student handbooks, programme specifications, and on student work assessment forms. Undergraduate students informed auditors that the relationship between intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria was explained by tutors, providing them with a clear understanding of assessment requirements and their achievement. However, MA Design Futures students were unclear about the distinction between formative and summative assessment, and the lack of clear feedback and grading before the final examination meant that their level of achievement was not clear to them.

130 The audit team reviewed a range of assessed work across all programmes and levels including essays, dissertations and projects. The team was satisfied that the assessed work matched the expectations of the programme specifications and the intended learning outcomes described in the programme and course descriptors. The standards achieved were appropriate to the relevant awards and their location within the FHEQ. At undergraduate level, however, feedback on assessed work is variable and not always timely.

131 Students informed the audit team that pre-entry information was accurate and comprehensive. All students receive detailed and helpful programme handbooks that describe intended learning outcomes at programme and course levels. Staff offer a wide range of expertise that is supplemented by specialist lecturers when appropriate and is fully appreciated by students. The Department acknowledges that teaching accommodation is not fully adequate, particularly for practice-based programmes. The Department itself has undertaken a number of measures to alleviate the problem, including a successful bid to HEFCE to update workshops. Students told the audit team that library and IT provision was adequate, and noted that the Department was beginning to develop the VLE as a teaching resource.

132 The audit team was able to confirm that student support was good. Prospective students receive accurate and comprehensive programme-specific entry information, may attend designated visits to schools, and are invited to departmental open days that are designed to encourage students to make appropriate choices. Overseas students are recruited informally and are provided with information via the Department's web page. All students are interviewed, with special arrangements being made for overseas students. Extra support is provided for students from non-traditional backgrounds through a range of activities including workshops and summer schools. All students are allocated a personal tutor who they see at least once a term, although students are also free to approach the senior tutor, or any member of staff with concerns. Students confirmed that there was strong academic and pastoral support from staff who were seen as approachable and available. Programme handbooks include useful information about college support resources, which is also available on the web. In particular, the Department has strong links with the Careers Liaison Service, and the employment record of design graduates from all modules is impressive.

133 The audit team was satisfied that the quality of the learning opportunities provided

for students is suitable for programmes of study leading to the named awards.

History

134 A DAT was conducted for programmes leading to the degree of BA (Hons) History, BA (Hons) English and History, and MA Cultural History. It was supported by a DSED prepared for the purposes of the audit, which was largely descriptive in nature. The DSED was accompanied by other documents including programme specifications for each programme. The History programmes are located in the new Department of History, which was launched as an independent department in September 2004. It grew out of the former Department of Historical and Cultural Studies following recommendations of the departmental review in spring 2003.

135 The programme specifications for the undergraduate programmes show that they are informed and guided by the relevant College and departmental documents and strategies, and that account had been taken of subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ, and that learning outcomes had been set at the appropriate level. In addition to these the M-level programme specification for Cultural History was also informed by other external reference points.

136 The recently introduced APR provided progression and completion data. Student progression and retention is monitored by the Learning and Teaching Committee twice a term. The audit team noted that a number of steps had been taken in an effort to reduce withdrawals, particularly for first year students. The team also noted that the programme team was concerned about the falling number of enrolments and small number of students progressing to year two for the BA programme for English and History, and that the situation was being monitored.

137 There are several mechanisms in place for ensuring quality and standards. The department is required to comply with the College's policy on learning and teaching and quality assurance, and is required to make an annual report Learning and Teaching Committee

the Academic Board. The Department's Learning and Teaching Committee oversees the enactment of policy; the supervision of quality and the formulation of new courses; programmes; strategies; and programme reviews. All new programme proposals are sent to at least two external readers and their comments are considered by the Learning and Teaching Committee. All business decided by the Learning and Teaching Committee is passed to the Departmental Board. It is too early in the introduction of the new AR process for the Department to evaluate its impact.

138 The reports of the external examiners for the degrees expressed positive views about the standards set for awards, about the achievements of students, and about the fairness with which the programme examination boards made their decisions. The Department considers the reports of its external examiners with care, and responds in a timely and appropriate manner to their recommendations. The Head of Department responds in writing to each external examiner, the examination officer in the Department also writes a report on an annual basis which considers all issues related to examinations and external examiners reports.

139 Formative assessment is conducted on all programmes through the completion of the required course-work essays. Students receive detailed written feedback on their essay on pro forma sheets. Summative assessment takes three main forms, unseen examination papers, dissertations and a portfolio of work. Summatively assessed work is double-marked. The audit team saw evidence of double-marking and of detailed written feedback by both markers, but evidence of reconciliation of marks was not consistent. Samples of work, borderline cases, disputes over marks between internal examiners, all first and fails are sent to external examiners. All the mark sheets are seen by external examiners. The Department has a History Examinations Handbook, this was produced for the first time in 2004-05 as an aid to internal and external examiners. The Handbook is designed for staff and it is intended to provide guidance on examining

procedures, candidate numbers, marking arrangements, and other information on examination processes.

140 Undergraduate students are provided with a comprehensive handbook offering a wide range of information about the Department, its organisation and its practices. The handbook outlines the courses available including learning outcomes and contains information about assessment procedures, assessment methods, and the marking criteria. A handbook containing similar information is provided for postgraduate students, although in the 2004-05 handbook, the learning outcomes for courses are not always stated. In addition, there is also a handbook for second and third year course choices, which provides a clear differentiation of learning outcomes for levels 2 and 3. These documents were considered by the audit team to be accessible and to aid student understanding of the expectations and responsibilities placed on them. The research students that the team met considered the handbook for research students to be an 'invaluable' resource which gives detailed advice on research and codes of practice. Students who met the audit team expressed positive views about the quality of the information they received.

141 The audit team reviewed a range of assessed undergraduate and postgraduate work. The team was satisfied that the nature of the assessment and the standard of student achievement met the expectations of the programme specifications, including those concerning the *Subject benchmark statement* for history, and were appropriate to the honours award of BA, and the award of MA and their location within the FHEQ.

142 Each student is assigned a personal tutor and they keep the same tutor throughout their degree programme. A diagnostic test of skills was introduced for first years in 2004 to help personal tutors and the Department identify the training needs of individual students. The newly created History Drop-In Centre run by and for students offering academic and personal support is perceived by students to be a

welcome addition. While all students have access to the University of London Library, the DSED notes that the College library provides only some of the basic texts for undergraduate programmes and that this is an area of concern. Students who met the audit team explained that staff in the Department provide additional material to augment the library provision, including in some instances substantial 'readers'.

143 Students are engaged with quality assurance and enhancement formally through course evaluations and through student representatives on the PMC. Student feedback through course evaluation are discussed at the programme monitoring meetings and at the Departmental Board. The Programme Monitor produces an annual report indicating issues raised; action required; action taken; outcome, for example in 2002-03 the appointment of a new member of staff to offer a non-Eurocentric dimension to the curriculum was in response to the issue being raised at a number of PMC meetings.

144 Overall, the audit team concluded that the quality of the learning opportunities available to undergraduate students is suitable for the programme of study leading to the named award.

Media and Communications

145 The DSED was written specifically for the audit and coincided with the drafting of the Department's learning and teaching strategy and Action Plan. It concentrated on, and named on its cover sheet, two main programmes, identified as the BA in Media and Communications, and the MA in Media and Communications. These were used to 'exemplify the Department's policies and processes in terms of maintaining academic standards and enhancing the student learning experience'. The other programmes covered by the DAT included: BA (Hons) in Anthropology and Communications; Media and Communications; Communications and Sociolog; International Media; Media and Modern Literature; and the MA programmes in Digital Media; Media and Communications; Transnational Communications and the Global Media; Image and Communications; Feature

Film; Journalism; Screen Documentary; Television Journalism; Radio and Script Writing. The audit team was informed that all programmes followed the same procedures. This broader spectrum was reflected in the documentation provided, and in the personnel present at meetings with staff and students.

146 The Department had used, and been guided by the *Subject benchmark statement* for communication, media, film and cultural studies, and by the FHEQ to develop its programme specifications and learning outcomes.

147 The DSED included a substantial section on progression and completion data, and this was complemented by further information contained in APR Report forms, the Department's Annual Report and other documentation. This included the results of a published survey, undertaken by the late Chair of the Department's Learning and Teaching Committee, which presented students' views on what they had gained in terms of professional and personal development. The Department makes a substantial effort to widen participation and has a commitment to offering places to mature candidates, and those from the working class and ethnic minorities. Many students come from the College's PACE programmes and are recruited from the local area. Transfer and withdrawal statistics show that most movement takes place in the first year of a programme. The Department attempts to register reasons for transfer and withdrawals but has been unable to identify the reason for an increase in undergraduate withdrawals during the 2003-04 session. Overall, progression and completion rates are satisfactory.

148 The DSED indicated that students' needs are monitored in a number of ways. These include PMCs and course evaluation. Staff expressed confidence in their own ability to monitor and maintain quality and standards at departmental level but had a less clear view of the institutional framework. The Department's learning and teaching strategy and Action Plan, which was introduced in January 2005, states that 'the implementation of this strategy is ultimately in the hands of the departmental Board'. Programme monitoring is undertaken

via twice yearly monitoring meetings with student representatives, and an Annual Monitoring Report written by programme monitors. These are discussed at the Departmental Board. In addition, APRs are prepared by programme convenors and considered by the Departmental Board. The Department has developed its own course evaluation questionnaire. Copies of this are completed by students in the last week of a course, read and summarised by the course convenor, and then submitted to the Department Learning and Teaching Committee which monitors the implementation of any action points. The DSED indicated, and meetings with staff and students confirmed, that issues are also addressed outside the cycle of PMCs. Course leaders, personal tutors and or student representatives can bring important issues to the attention of programme coordinators or the head of department.

149 The audit team saw copies of external examiners' reports and the Head of Department's responses to these reports. Overall, the external examiners were positive about the programmes and satisfied with marking standards and procedures. There were some comments with regard to the poor quality of English, however, the provision of language support is regarded as a College-wide issue. The team saw evidence that suggestions made by external examiners has been acted on, for instance the introduction of a special award for Outstanding Academic Performance. At the postgraduate level most external examiners are practitioners and the staff indicated that external examiners, and professional bodies, influenced programme development. Two programmes are the subject of professional accreditation. Although the professional accreditation reports go forward to the Academic Committee, a practice that has been recently reinstated, the team considered it desirable that the College considers ways in which such reports from external bodies might be used for the wider benefit of the College.

150 Assessment methods are set out in the programme specifications. A range of methods is

used. Many modules have coursework which provides formative assessment. There is a variety of summative assessment including formal examinations with a mixture of seen and unseen papers. BA students on practice courses receive continuous feedback on coursework and final year project work, either in individual or group tutorials. Some theory courses make use of diaries as part of assessment and such innovations have been praised by external examiners. Students in the Department indicated that the quality of feedback was variable. In reviewing examples of assessed work the audit team noted some discrepancies in, for example, the quality and quantity of comments by tutors. The staff stated that in part this was the result of copying difficulties, but acknowledged that it also reflected varying practice by visiting tutors (VTs). This is an issue that is being addressed by the Department. The learning and teaching strategy promises, 'Practice VT seminars...to include established staff and to act as a means of disseminating good practice'. The Department is to be encouraged in its intention to develop this practice. Overall, on the basis of reviewing a sample of assessed work taken from courses at each level, the audit team were satisfied that the nature of the assessment and standard of student achievement were appropriate to the titles of the relevant awards and their location within the FHEQ.

151 Student handbooks, seen by the audit team, described departmental practices, student support services and procedures, and the rights and responsibilities of students. The handbooks also provide details of assessment methods including essay grading criteria. Course outlines in printed and electronic format provide a week by week breakdown of teaching and course content, seminar exercises and suggested readings. Students found the handbooks to be clear and comprehensive, but suggested that, although the assessment criteria are very full, they are not always clearly explained. Staff acknowledged that students had requested more verbal information and indicated that tutors were responding to this request.

152 The DSED indicated serious concerns about the quality of the teaching accommodation. The Media Production Centre is described in the DSED as 'coming to the end of its life' and the poor quality of the accommodation was reported as being acknowledged by Estates. This concern was confirmed by staff and students. Part of the Department is housed in temporary accommodation and the College is developing plans to have this replaced. Students also complained about library opening times and felt that the VLE was under used. The media and communications collection are described in the SED as, 'amongst the best in the University of London' and the Subject Librarian, who received praise from staff, has developed a comprehensive collection of videos and DVDs. Measures were now being taken by the College to extend library opening times (see above paragraph 83).

153 Staff were confident that they listen and respond to student views. It is acknowledged that much of this is on an informal basis. Students found the staff supportive and approachable and gave examples of where immediate and beneficial changes had been introduced in response to student concerns. At the same time they also indicated that some issues appear to remain unresolved. The complaints about the variability of visiting tutors being one example. The Department, in its learning and teaching strategy, acknowledges that the process of responding to student evaluations has not quite 'bedded in' but confirms that 'evaluations are now being used in VT appraisals'.

154 The DSED states that 'all staff and students are encouraged to be pro-active in monitoring the Department's standards'. There are, however, limited formal opportunities for students to contribute to teaching quality procedures. Students are represented on PMC and their views are conveyed informally via programme monitoring representatives. Students reported that there still remains a feeling that issues are not always acted upon, and or that feed back is inadequate. There is no student representation on the Department Learning and Teaching

Committee, and the Department may wish to reconsider this in its attempts to ensure representation from different areas.

155 The audit team found evidence to support the claim that the active research culture of the Department enhances learning at all levels. The students met by the team said that they had benefited from research led teaching and praised the staff for being informed and enthusiastic. Overall, the team noted much informal good practice, and a gradual involvement with college systems.

156 The audit team was satisfied that the quality of learning opportunities available to students is suitable for programmes of study leading to the named awards.

Psychology

157 The DSED was prepared specifically for the audit and programme specifications were provided in each case. The scope of the DAT comprised provision in the Department of Psychology covering the BSc (Hons) in Psychology; the MSc in Occupational Psychology and MRes in Research Methods in Psychology.

158 The BSc Psychology programme specification, contained an appropriate level of detail which was presented in the explicit context of the *Subject benchmark statement* for psychology, the *Code of practice*, the FHEQ, the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Quality Assurance Policies and Practice for First Qualifications in Psychology and the College's learning and teaching strategy. The programme is recognised for the Graduate Basis for Recognition by the BPS. The programme specification for the MSc in Occupational Psychology incorporated similar and appropriate linkages, although the statement of such was less explicit in this case. This programme also has full BPS accreditation. In both cases the provision was described effectively and in line with the College's advice on the preparation of programme specifications, and incorporated the relevant aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. Each was also supplemented by a curriculum map (2005) which, in the case of the BSc

Psychology, identified the modules contributing to the programme level learning outcomes. In the case of the MSc Occupational Psychology, the mapping identified the course components contributing to the programme outcomes in relation to the areas defined by the BPS.

159 Progression and completion data for APR and for professional accreditation purposes comes from both College and departmental sources which are seen by staff as interdependent. The progression data made available to the audit team in the DAT APR and other documentation showed that progression rates in the BSc were high as were those for the MSc programmes. The sophistication of the analysis was at a reasonable level and provided an appropriate basis for academic planning decisions to be reached. Although staff welcomed the progress being achieved with respect to College student information management and with the data arising therefrom, they felt it was too early to determine the impact of these developments on the information base upon which local academic decisions were being made.

160 A range of documentation, including both undergraduate and postgraduate APR reports, Programme Committee termly reports and course evaluation summaries, was made available to the team. This material demonstrated that the newly redefined APR process was being mobilised effectively by the Department. The documentation also illustrated how the more recent process was in fact more able to identify and address relevant quality and standards issues than was the case previously. In undertaking the review (Psychology being one of the first departments to trial the revised process for 2003-04), the Department recorded the stages of its considerations fully through the proceedings of its Departmental and Learning and Teaching Committee(s) and through those of its Departmental Board. It being pertinent to note that this latter included student membership.

161 The audit team was provided by the Department, with the necessary documentary evidence to follow the BPS accreditation

process relating to both undergraduate and postgraduate provision. This documentation revealed the full engagement the departmental staff had with the process and the thorough way in which the report from the accreditation body was addressed locally. Any links with an institutional involvement in the process were not identified from the evidence presented.

162 From the discussions the audit team held with DAT staff, together with the evaluation of the documentation provided, it was possible to form a positive view on the level of engagement and the support for enhancement staff derive from the accreditation and the annual review processes. Similarly the department demonstrated a positive and beneficial approach to the requirements placed on it by the College.

163 The audit team had access to external (visiting) examiners' reports for both the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Such reports adhered to the requirements of the College's report template and were consistent in style and coverage. They provided sufficient detail for their message to be clear and demonstrated that external examiners had confidence in the standards of the awards and the standards of student attainment. The local adherence with the preparation and approval of responses to external examiners reports and the incorporation of their consideration into APR was found to be appropriate. However, evidence that feedback from the College had an effect on the process was difficult to adduce. Overall, the team was able to confirm that responses to external examiners' reports were generally, timely, balanced and indicated a willingness by the Department to take action in a wholly appropriate manner in line with the University's defined procedures.

164 Documents made available to the audit team included the Department Learning and Teaching Committee, grading criteria for written assessments (both old and new) and programme regulations. These documents demonstrated an appropriate confluence with the equivalent, relevant, College-level statements and provided a basis for the assurance of the quality of provision and the

standards of awards. Although the assessments used were of a standard nature and were in general limited to fixed-time examinations and dissertations, their application and operation adhered to the principles established in relation to the relevant section of the QAA *Code of practice*. The team was provided with a full range of student work from a variety of years of study and from both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Although in a range of instances the full details of the assessment task was not given, in many cases sufficient information on the assessment criteria and marks distribution was available, demonstrating that marking was in line with the stated expectations of performance. Although feedback on the undergraduate work was incomplete in those cases, involving a pro forma mark/feedback form, where it was included, the feedback was of an appropriate scale and of a helpful nature. The use of such pro forma and the provision of feedback was demonstrated more systematically in the case of the postgraduate student work provided.

165 The audit team saw examples of assessed course work and was able to confirm that student performance was being determined in line with the stated learning outcomes. The team was able to form the view that due care was being exercised in relation to marking, moderation and the relevance/sufficiency of feedback and, where such data was recorded systematically, it was in a form of value to student learning. The team was able to confirm that student performance, illustrated by the student work seen, is at an appropriate level of achievement which is in line with the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

166 The audit team was provided with year one, year two and final year handbooks for undergraduate students studying the BSc Psychology and the equivalent relevant to the MSc Occupational Psychology. The handbooks adhered to a common format that was broadly in line with the College guidelines on such handbooks. The programme information, which formed the core of the handbooks, was explicit, helpful and supplemented by user-friendly information. The expected outcomes,

pattern of study and learning opportunities were clearly described and the way in which student work would be assessed was described fully and in a way which made expectations of performance clear. The accuracy, relevance and utility of this and other information available to students was confirmed through student discussions. The team formed the view that students felt confident in their knowledge of the learning expected of them in order to achieve their qualification goal and of how that learning would be assessed. The team formed the view that the handbooks and associated programme support materials formed a significant and worthwhile contribution to the academic support of students across the range of Psychology programmes seen.

167 In its consideration of student handbooks and through discussions with students and staff the audit team were informed of the confidence all parties had in the adequacy of the learning infrastructure for studies in Psychology. The recent, and ongoing, improvements in the nature and amount of space available was considered by staff and students as a clear enhancement. Indeed students were fully supportive of the infrastructure available in support of their learning. The team was satisfied that the comments recorded in the PMC had been acted on appropriately.

168 The formal and informal processes available to support both the academic and other aspects of their learning experience, were fully endorsed by students who confirmed the availability and helpfulness of staff, the clarity of the expectations placed on them and the academic and other feedback they received. Students were fully informed with regard to their intended/expected learning outcomes and recognised fully the link these had with the assessment tasks they undertook.

169 In relation to student feedback, the audit team was able to review the PMC minutes (BSc, MSc), examples of student questionnaire and departmental analysis, evidence of actions taken and notification of students of such actions. The content of these documents were consistent with the endorsement students gave to the ample formal and informal opportunities

that were available to them for making their view known. Students were confident that their voices were heard and that action was elicited by their contributions. It was less clear to students however as to how formally the feedback loops informing them of such actions operated.

170 Overall, the audit team was satisfied that the standard of student achievement in the programmes covered by the DAT is appropriate to the titles of the awards, and their location within the FHEQ and the quality of the learning opportunities is suitable for the programmes of study in Psychology leading to the named awards.

Section 4: The audit investigations: published information

The students' experience of published information and other information available to them

171 In the course of the audit, the audit team saw a wide range of printed and electronic information. The printed information reviewed included the prospectus; undergraduate and postgraduate programme handbooks; programme outlines; programme specifications; and module resource packs. Access was also provided to the College's websites which contain a large amount of information on programmes and college facilities. The SED stated that, 'the student experience at Goldsmiths is enhanced by information produced/provided by the Communications and Publicity Office'. It also claimed that all student recruitment materials are agreed with the department(s) concerned and then checked by the Registry to ensure accuracy in line with admissions and regulations. The College's Communication and Information Strategy, which was approved in December 2003, highlighted the need for the redesign of internal web sites. It also identified email as being a potentially major communication tool between the College and students, but the SED recognised that there are many difficulties with this area.

172 The SWS included a detailed analysis of student views on published information. This, together with views gathered via meetings with students generally supports the assessment given in the SED. Students consulted for the SWS survey were mostly positive about the accuracy of information provided by the College. The SWS cited as good practice, the prospectus, departmental handbooks and the publication 'information for students' which is provided during enrolment. Overall, the prospectus received a positive judgement from students who the audit team met and it was described as clear and accurate. Departmental handbooks were regarded as a key source of information but the SWS notes 'significant differences' from department to department. There is some concern that the College websites are not maximising their potential and that not all departments are fully utilising the VLE. The SWS, and meetings with students, identified various omissions and superficial treatment of some details, for instance in the recruitment material there was no mention of the additional costs of some courses. Students following Combined Honours programmes found the information less accurate. According to the SWS combined honours students expressed, 'a higher level of dissatisfaction as a result of relying on information from separate departments' .

173 On the whole, it appeared to the audit team that the information made available to students was satisfactory. Meetings with staff and students and documentation, such as the College's Communication and Information Strategy, confirmed that efforts are being made to address the weaknesses acknowledged in the SED and reported via the SWS survey. The College has produced a revised set of guidelines on the information provided to students by academic departments, via their programme or departmental booklets. These are described as, 'more prescriptive and required departments to include certain information', such as College complaints procedures. All handbooks are to be produced to the appropriate standard and there is the intention that regular audits of handbooks be

undertaken. With regard to electronic provision, a working group involving staff from the Students Union, Internal Communications, Information Services and the Student Support Office has been established to enable the College to address many of the issues related to email communication with students. An 'Issues Plan' published as an Appendix to the College's Communication and Information Strategy provides a summary of whom and what will be involved in achieving these objectives.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

174 Under the College's Publications and Publicity Policy, there are clear lines of responsibility for ensuring that materials are accurate. Heads of department are responsible for ensuring that the content of their printed and web based recruitment materials is factually accurate. The SED stated that these materials 'are all subject to rigorous checks, to ensure that they do not contain misleading material'. In 2003 guidelines and templates for the content of recruitment booklets were developed to help ensure that materials contained the appropriate level of information. The SED acknowledged that these need to be expanded so as to make certain they include reference to current initiatives relating to teaching quality information. The audit team noted that the College has won several awards for its student recruitment material.

175 The QAO is responsible for coordinating the College's teaching quality information for the Higher Education and Research Opportunities in the UK (HERO) website. The audit team was able to confirm that the College has already provided a report on its teaching and learning strategy, a summary of how it identifies employer's needs and trends, and a commentary on the Higher Education Statistics Agency data. Summaries of the periodic programme reviews are also to be placed on the HERO website, and a body of these is gradually building up. The SED stated that for the first time, 'External Examiner reports have been submitted electronically to the Office,

which will enable them to be monitored centrally'. Programme specifications will be linked as new versions are produced for the web. The team was informed by staff that the College has a project team working on the data, and that they are rewriting and revising programme specifications in order to meet the needs of the student audience and the public.

176 On the basis of the information available to it at the time of the audit, the team concluded that the College has made good progress in meeting the requirements set out in document HEFCE 03/51, the final guidance on *Information on quality and standards in higher education*, and is moving in an appropriate manner to fulfil its responsibilities in this respect.

Findings

Findings

177 An institutional audit of Goldsmiths College (the College) was undertaken during the week 14 to 18 March 2005. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the College's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility for conferring degrees of the University. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Standing Conference of Principals and Universities UK, four discipline audit trails (DATs) were selected for scrutiny. This section of the report of the audit summarises the findings of the audit. It concludes by identifying features of good practice that emerged from the audit, and recommendations to the College for enhancing current practice.

The effectiveness of the institution's procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

178 Proposals for new programmes are considered for approval against academic and resource criteria. The procedures are set out in the Quality Handbook and elsewhere. Initial scrutiny by senior College managers of the resource implications of a proposal may be followed by its further development for academic consideration by the Programme Approval and Review Sub-Committee (PARSC). If PARSC recommends approval, the proposal is passed to the Academic Committee, and thence to the Academic Board for final approval. The self-evaluation document (SED) stated that the programme specification is now established as the key document in the approval process, and that the College associates this step with an improvement in the quality of submissions. External readers' reports are said by the SED to be a key reference point for PARSC in providing specialist academic input on new proposals. The audit team was of the view that the value of this input would be enhanced if external peers were present at the relevant meetings of the sub-committee and enabled to participate more directly in their outcomes.

179 The College has introduced this year a process of (APR). The process draws together the various programme monitoring inputs, already in place in College departments, in a cohesive annual review of the programme's operation. This is assembled into a report by the programme leader which is circulated within departmental committees and provided also for the Quality Affairs Office (QAO). According to the Quality Handbook, summaries of these programme reports are sent up into the central committee system and feedback returns to the level of the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC), a staff/student liaison committee into which students make inputs on their experience of the programme. The audit team found a low level of familiarity among staff with the procedural aspects of this very new annual review mechanism. Indeed, the SED itself stated that the dissemination routes through committees and to external examiners and students remain to be determined. The College is therefore advised of the need to ensure both that the process is reviewed early, as intended, and that the process going forward is effectively embedded across the institution.

180 Periodic programme/departmental review is also a recently introduced process and borrows in its aims and methods from external practices in quality assurance. The College intends that cumulative APRs will inform the periodic review of programmes. Reviews are based on an SED and supporting evidence, and are conducted by a panel which includes external subject reviewers. The review leads to a report and a consequent departmental action plan, the process being centrally overseen by the Academic Committee. The SED stated that departmental feedback on periodic review had been generally very positive. Evidence seen by the audit team indicated that the process is robust and effective and a valuable addition to the College's quality assurance arrangements.

181 The College considers that student feedback is an integral input to the quality assurance process for programmes and this is collected via several routes: programme monitoring committee meetings with student

representation; course evaluation forms and by student representation on departmental and College committees. The QAO works closely with the Students' Union in ensuring feedback mechanisms are working effectively. This initiative should enhance the effectiveness of the College's procedures for assuring the quality of programmes. A range of programmes is offered, many of which have a professional or vocational focus, in a significant number of areas the College enjoys strong ties with employers working in the relevant occupational fields. Links with employers are also cultivated through placement schemes offered in a number of College departments. While departments maintain a range of contacts with graduates, there is no formal College policy or provision for collecting feedback from them.

182 The College's involvement in distance-learning methods is presently confined to its work as the lead college for English and Computing in the External Programme of the University of London. While academic standards are, through the assessment process, under University control, quality assurance of the student's learning experience is shared between the University and the College under a new framework established by the external programme. This incorporates joint annual and periodic programme review processes.

183 The College's collaborative provision is presently limited to the validation of programmes in Art Psychotherapy leading to the award of a College Diploma. These programmes, which the SED stated are essentially the same as the internal College programme, are delivered at two partner institutions, in Germany and Switzerland. The validated programmes are subject to the College's internal quality assurance procedural framework including programme monitoring, course evaluation, external examiner reports, and annual and periodic programme review. The SED notes recent training and guidance provided for partner institutions on the quality assurance procedures and the Academic Infrastructure, with particular attention to the new APR process and the development of programme specifications. The audit team saw evidence of these initiatives,

which it considered represent good practice. The College may wish to ensure that this good practice is consolidated through the embedding of processes assuring quality and standards; their manifest integration with College processes; and the continuing development of central oversight of collaborative quality assurance by the Academic Committee.

184 The SED acknowledged the unresolved issue of how comparability of standards across the Diploma programmes in Germany and Switzerland and at the College is to be measured and demonstrated. This was a particular concern of the QAA Report of December 2002 on the collaboration in Switzerland, which stated that 'the College's stewardship of the standards of its validated award [is] weakened by the limited information it receives relating to the comparison of the achievements of students [at the partner institution] with those completing a similar programme in the UK'. The College is seeking to establish a process of retrospective cross marking to scrutinise relative student performance and marking standards across the programmes. Consideration is also being given to identifying and appointing a single external examiner for the award. The audit team's view is that while the cross-marking initiative may provide some useful clarification in respect of standards of achievement and marking, it falls short nonetheless of moderation by College staff of work being assessed. Further, the validated programmes continue to lack an external examiner with the linguistic scope and experience of UK higher education that would seem to be required for full and effective oversight of the assessment process and standards of achievement. The College is advised of the continuing need to resolve the issues relating to the assurance of the standards of awards in its collaborative provision. For the Lausanne Diploma programme offered under direction of the College's partner institution in Bern, staffing and communication difficulties have led to a cessation of recruitment. The College is advised of the need to give close monitoring attention to the quality and

standard of the learning experience provided for continuing students.

185 The College considered in its SED the stage it had reached in the development of its quality management arrangements for the approval of new programmes; monitoring and reviewing existing programmes; gathering the views of students; employers and other external stakeholders; and its external and collaborative provision. The audit team noted the emphasis placed on the development and consolidation of the links between the centre and the departments, in particular through the roles of the the Academic Committee and the QAO, and the recent initiatives that have been taken by the College to ensure that all its academic provision, including its external and collaborative provision, receives equal critical oversight from the centre. These initiatives will be reinforced by the continuing development of processes for monitoring, reviewing and embedding institutional quality assurance systems which the College has begun to undertake.

The effectiveness of the institution's procedures for securing the standards of awards

186 Although, the College's committee system as a whole has been under review since 2003-04 and the precise relationships between the components of that system may still be evolving, the audit team noted the formal involvement of the Academic Board, the Academic Committee, the College Board of Examiners, departmental boards and the oversight of the Warden and the Pro-Warden (Academic) in the maintenance of academic standards. At the same time the regulatory framework for the College's programmes of study at institutional and programme levels has been the subject of extensive review following recommendations made in the QAA audit report of 2002.

187 It is intended that this revised framework will address more fully the needs of the Academic Infrastructure and be implemented from 2005-06. The revised framework will provide a potentially more robust basis upon which the sub-boards and the College Board of

Examiners particularly can achieve a view on the comparability of awards and their standards across the College's programmes, the current claim for which the audit team found insufficient evidence in support. At departmental level the team found appropriate evidence in support of programme and assessment standards being consonant with the intentions of the Academic Infrastructure and that these standards were clearly signalled to students and endorsed by external examiners. At departmental level it was also clear that comparability of standards was based on the views of external examiners and external intra-subject comparisons rather than any significant internal comparison across disciplines.

188 Statistics on recruitment, progression, withdrawals, and degree classification are collected by the College and in some instances have been analysed by gender, age, home region, ethnic origin, and disability. Retention is identified as an important part of the College's learning and teaching strategy and this has led to close monitoring of retention rates at departmental and programme level. The College has created a post of Data Analyst specifically charged with improving the quantity and quality of data concerning recruitment, admissions and widening participation. It also recognises the need to undertake a more systematic analysis of student withdrawals, and acknowledges that there are limitations in the way that the current student records system is constructed. It is acknowledged that there is still room for improvement in the level and scope of analytical data used to underpin recruitment and admission processes. A working group has been established to consider, progression, recruitment and retention and there are plans to provide departments with comparative data so as to enable them to benchmark their performance in terms of completion, progress and retention.

189 The College invests 'the key role in the assurance of standards of awards' with its external examiners who act by 'providing an external peer view of the achievements of students'. The College has procedures in place for the nomination and approval of external examiners which ensure appropriate peers are

engaged, and such individuals receive supportive documentation which equips them adequately for their role. The reports produced by external examiners, together with the input of staff external to the College into programme approvals, provide a concerted support to the assurance of the standards demanded by its programmes and those achieved by its students. External examiners attend assessment sub-boards in departments and therefore help to assure standards at programme level. However, although they are invited to attend the College Board of Examiners they rarely do, again making the claim that the College Board of Examiners ensures comparability of standard difficult to sustain fully.

The effectiveness of the institution's procedures for supporting learning

190 The College oversees its provision to support learning through a number of committees and service departments. The Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) undertakes long-term learning resource support planning and reports direct to Council. The Communications and Information Policy Committee, which is a sub-committee of FRC, advises on policy and produces an overall strategy to promote the use of resources that includes the library, IT, human resources and teaching accommodation. Information Services manages a wide range of resource provision, including the library and Computer Services. Academic and pastoral support for undergraduates is overseen by the Student Services Committee, which reports to the Academic Board. Student Services manages a comprehensive range of support offices, as well as working with academic departments in order to enhance the student learning experience. Individual academic support is supplied via a personal tutor system, which is the responsibility of heads of department. Postgraduate support is managed by the Postgraduate Research Committee (PGRC) that reports to the Academic Committee and ultimately to the Academic Board. Human resources are managed by the Human Resources Strategy Committee, which reports to FRC. The constituent service

departments have developed detailed plans and self-evaluation procedures.

191 Information Services is housed in the Rutherford Information Services Building (RISB) that offers library and IT support to students. The College has invested in book stock and has a pro-active strategy to develop learning technologies, in particular, the VLE 'learn.gold'. Responding to student concerns, the College has undertaken a pilot to extend the RISB's opening hours. Induction and information provided by Information Services is detailed and user friendly. Teaching accommodation has been increased, particularly with the development of the Ben Pimlott Building. One of the DATs, media and communications, highlighted serious concerns about the quality of teaching accommodation, which are recognised by College, and plans are being drawn up to remedy the situation.

192 All undergraduate students are allocated a personal tutor, although the system is not employed uniformly across departments and, consequently, the College has set up a working party to review the process. This working party has now reported with recommendations that are to be implemented from 2005. Individual academic support from staff is uniformly good, although feedback on assessed work varies across departments. The PGRC has been proactive in the development of provision for postgraduate students, initiating learning support and successfully monitoring its effectiveness. Handbooks providing academic guidance are generally comprehensive and useful.

193 Through Student Services, the College offers a wide range of personal support, particularly at admissions where there is special provision for non-traditional entry and disabled students. At department level, personal support is primarily provided by the senior tutor, who liaises with Student Services as necessary. Additional support is offered via the departmental administrators. Pre-entry and induction information is thorough.

194 In matters of the quality of teaching and staff development the audit team noted that the

staff Training and Development Unit (TDU) has a College-wide focus. The unit designs and delivers customized development activities, provides general advice to individuals on continuing professional development and provides guidance to departments on the design and delivery of local staff developments. Programmes are offered with a planned and bespoke approach to help staff develop within the College. The audit team also noted the good practice of Centre for Excellence in Learning Teaching Technology (CELT) which was established to support College staff in their use of using all aspects of technology in their learning and teaching activities and in particular the availability of CELT Fellowships to departments.

195 The individual service departments and committees generally offer students good learning support, in terms of resources and in academic and pastoral terms. In particular, the College has been proactive in assuring and enhancing the quality of IT and postgraduate provision, as well as in staff development. However, the responsibility for learning support is situated in a number of committees, with the FRC reporting to Council and the Academic Committee and Student Services Committee reporting to the Academic Board, and thereby to Council. While the QAO is undertaking to provide feedback and liaison in some areas, notably teaching accommodation, currently there is no clear and effective decision-making process at senior committee level. As a result the effectiveness of learning support provision remains variable.

Outcomes of discipline audit trails

Design

196 The DAT covered the following programmes offered by the Department of Design: the BA (Hons) in Design; BA (Hons) in Eco Design; BA (Hons) in Computing with Design for the World Wide Web; MA in Design Futures; MA in Design - Critical Theory and Practice; and MRes in Design. The DSED was written specifically for the audit and this exemplified the Department's approach by focusing on two programmes. The audit team

examined a range of material including assessed student work, comments of external examiners and met with students and staff.

197 The audit team formed the view that the standard of student achievement in the programmes was appropriate to the title of the awards and their location within the FHEQ. This view was reaffirmed by external examiner reports. Programme specifications were detailed and clear and followed the *Subject benchmark statement* for art and design, the relevant codes of practice, the FHEQ and College guidelines. Programme and module aims, assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes, were clearly described in student handbooks and effectively communicated to students. There is effective monitoring of student progression and retention data and module evaluation. Student feedback is effectively obtained although the auditors noted that some issues were not always addressed in a timely fashion. Provision is enhanced through a range of mechanisms, including staff appraisal, staff development and external links with the profession. Published information provided to students is comprehensive and accurate. Teaching accommodation is acknowledged to be not fully adequate, however, measures are in place to address this. Personal and academic support for students is good. The team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for programmes of study leading to these awards.

History

198 The DAT covered the degree programmes for BA (Hons) in History, BA (Hons) for English and History and the MA in Cultural History. From its study of students' assessed work, and from discussions with students and staff, the audit team formed the view that the standard of student achievement in the degree programmes was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ. The programme specifications set out appropriate educational aims and differentiated learning outcomes for levels of study, and that these are linked to the teaching and learning styles, support and assessment that students could

expect to receive. The programme specifications are referenced to the *Subject benchmark statement* for history.

199 Student evaluation of the programmes is favourable, noting in particular the academic support provided by the staff of the Department both formally and informally. The audit team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities provided for students, including postgraduate research students was suitable for the degree programmes offered.

Media and communications

200 The DAT covered the BA honours degree programmes in Anthropology and Communications; Media and Communications; Communications and Sociology; International Media; Media and Modern Literature; and the MA programmes in Digital Media; Media and Communications; Transnational Communications and the Global Media; Image and Communications; Feature Film; Journalism; Screen Documentary; Television Journalism; Radio; and Script Writing.

201 From its study of students' assessed work, and from discussions with students and staff, the audit team was able to confirm that the standard of student achievement is appropriate to the titles of the above awards and their location within the FHEQ. Programme specifications were made available for each of the awards used to 'exemplify the Department's policies and processes' and these had been informed by the appropriate subject benchmark statements. They set out the appropriate educational aims and learning outcomes and gave details of learning and teaching methods, and details of assessment. In general, the examples of assessment sampled by the team were satisfactory, and work is being undertaken to decrease the variability between tutors.

202 The Department makes a substantial effort to widen participation and has a commitment to offering places to mature candidates, and those from the working class and ethnic minorities. Many students come from the College's PACE programmes and are recruited from the local area. Overall, student evaluation

of the programmes was positive. The audit team concluded that the quality of learning opportunities is suitable for programmes of study leading to the named awards.

Psychology

203 The DAT covered the following programmes: the BSc (Hons) in Psychology; MSc in Occupational Psychology; and MRes in Research Methods in Psychology.

204 The definition of the relevant programmes was clearly stated for students and was fully referenced to the Academic Infrastructure and the relevant professionally defined standards. Assessment was clearly defined and demonstrated appropriate congruence with institutional expectations, and the methods used were fairly applied. Annual monitoring adhered to the newly introduced procedural requirements of the College and illustrated beneficial outcomes for the Department. Handbooks and other programme support materials formed a worthwhile contribution to the academic support of students, who endorsed their learning environment and the support to learning they received from staff. The audit team formed the view that the student achievement was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ, and the quality of the learning opportunities is suitable for programmes of study leading to the named awards.

The use made by the institution of the Academic Infrastructure

205 Since 2001 consideration of the implications of the Academic Infrastructure for the College and its programmes has passed through a number of stages. These have included a Quality and Standards Working Party which through its successor body (Programme Specification Working Party) promoted the development of programme specifications which took account of the FHEQ level descriptors and subject benchmark statements. Substantially this objective has been achieved by the College. Subsequently the management of the College's ongoing engagement with the

Academic Infrastructure has been through the QAO, which has produced guidance on the preparation of programme specifications in relation to the Academic Infrastructure and has more recently undertaken a further mapping of the College's position with respect to the QAA *Code of practice*. The QAO has also reviewed this position and advised the Academic Committee on the policy committees and offices with primary responsibility for specified areas of the *Code*. While recognising this engagement with the Academic Infrastructure at institutional level is fully complemented by appreciation of the guidance it offers to departmental staff in their use of the *Code*, most of the key quality assurance and standards related processes do not make explicit their linkage with the Academic Infrastructure in their descriptions. Notwithstanding the relative lack of explicit reference to the Academic Infrastructure in College documentation the audit team found ample evidence at programme level of its use and the impact it was having on the maintenance of quality and standards.

The utility of the SED as an illustration of the institution's capacity to reflect upon its own strengths and limitations, and to act on these to enhance quality and standards

206 Overall, the SED provided a clear and fair account of the College's state of development in the assurance of quality and standards. While it provided only relatively limited evidence of the engagement by the College and its departments with the Academic Infrastructure, there was evidence that there had been a systematic approach to the consideration of the elements of the Academic Infrastructure. The SED acknowledged the recency and indeed newness of a number of its initiatives and was frank about instances where arrangements had not yet been finally determined. The SED recognised the need, which the College is addressing, for strengthening of central oversight of quality assurance across the academic departments. This means, as the SED

said, combining an ethos of monitoring with one of facilitation and support.

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

207 In its SED the College indicated its belief that learning and teaching development and enhancement lies at the heart of its approach to the assurance of quality and standards. The College was also able to demonstrate that at both institutional, service and departmental levels initiatives in support of the continuous improvement of learning and teaching were occurring. The institutional component of this was based upon the emerging impact of the work of the LTO and the clarification of its distinctive role, relative to the QAO.

208 The College also looks upon its evolving learning and teaching strategy and the responses it is designed to evoke at departmental level as a future major source of enhancement opportunities and activity. However, in general terms both the Academic Strategy and the institutional and departmental learning and teaching strategies are of relatively recent origin and as yet cannot be seen to be the demonstrable origin of concerted enhancement across the institution.

209 In terms of its quality and standards related processes, their recent re-appraisal, augmentation and presentation indicate an intention by the College to continue to improve such processes although it was more difficult to ascertain how the changes would enhance the capture and dissemination of the good practice that might be identified from their use. Indeed, although enhancement initiatives were a feature of the College's activities there was little evidence of a systematic or strategic approach being taken to the identification of good practice and the assurance of continued institution wide enhancement.

Reliability of information

210 Under the College's Publications and Publicity Policy, there are clear lines of

responsibility for ensuring that materials are accurate. Heads of department are responsible for ensuring that the content of their printed and web based recruitment materials is factually accurate. The prospectuses, handbooks and other promotional literature scrutinised by the audit team appeared to it to be accurate, and the processes for ensuring continuing accuracy to be generally reliable.

211 The QAO is responsible for coordinating the College's Teaching Quality Information (TQI) for the HERO website. The audit team can confirm that the College has already provided material to meet its responsibilities for the provision of TQI. The team was informed that the College has a project team working on the data and that they are rewriting and revising programme specifications in order to meet the needs of the target audience.

212 On the basis of the information available to it at the time of the audit the team concluded that the College was alert to the requirements set out in document *HEFCE 03/51*, the final guidance on *Information on quality and standards in higher education*, and was moving in an appropriate manner to fulfil its responsibilities in this respect.

Features of good practice

213 The following features of good practice were noted:

- i the initiatives of the QAO in developing the College's quality agenda, including staff development initiatives in collaboration with partner institutions (paragraphs 32 and 118)
- ii the commitment and proactive contribution of members of institutional and departmental support staff to the enhancement of the student experience (paragraph 33)
- iii the sharing of good practice via regular meetings of the departmental administrators with representatives of the QAO and the Registry (paragraph 33)
- iv the support being given to learning and teaching through initiatives being undertaken by the Learning and Teaching Office and through the availability to departments of CELT fellowships (paragraph 101).

Recommendations for action

214 Recommendations for action that is advisable:

- i to monitor and evaluate its proposed arrangements, when and where implemented, for Academic Board's exercise of its responsibilities for quality and standards, with particular reference to the role of Academic Committee and other key committees (paragraph 28)
- ii to assure itself that it has in place comprehensive means of monitoring, evaluating, developing and improving the effectiveness of its quality assurance systems, and their impact on enhancement (paragraph 30)
- iii to provide on a continuing basis such support for the QAO as will enable it to ensure that the College's quality assurance processes become fully and thoroughly embedded within departments (paragraphs 32 and 51)
- iv to consider further the efficacy of its current systems for ensuring the comparability of its awards across departments at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels (paragraph 90)
- v to develop a clearer and more effective decision-making process for ensuring that the learning infrastructure meets student needs (paragraph 107)
- vi to resolve outstanding issues relating to the assurance of the standard of awards in collaborative provision (paragraphs 20, 48 and 119), including the close monitoring of the ITP programme delivered in Lausanne in order ensure a comparable level of learning experience (paragraph 120).

215 Recommendations for action that is desirable:

- i to provide a clearer and more strategic formulation of its intentions for enhancement (paragraphs 43 to 46)
- ii to consider enhancing the involvement of external peers in the final approval of new academic programmes (paragraphs 48 and 56)
- iii to encourage a more systematic approach to preparation for and response to professional bodies in order to enhance College learning through the sharing of experience and good practice (paragraph 149).

Appendix

Goldsmiths College's response to the audit report

The College is very pleased with the positive and supportive nature of the audit team's report and QAA's broad confidence in the management of the quality and standards of our provision, both at institutional level and in all four Discipline Audit Trails. We welcome the commendations of good practice, particularly in relation to new developments and initiatives in learning and teaching and the College's quality agenda, as well as the recognition of the important contribution of the support staff to the student experience.

We are pleased that the audit team was able to concur with the College's own view as expressed in the self-evaluation document that there had been significant and effective work on issues identified in the previous audit of 2001. The College was also gratified to note that the areas the audit team advised for further attention were those on which the College was already working, such as the committee review and aspects of collaborative provision.

The College is also pleased that the audit team found that its self-evaluation document provided a clear and fair account of the College's state of development in the assurance of quality and standards and that it had addressed appropriately the Academic Infrastructure and the requirements of Teaching Quality Information.

The College is confident that the quality assurance policies and processes commended by the audit team will prove effective in supporting a strategic approach to the further enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching and the student experience.

A revised action plan taking into account the audit team's valuable and constructive feedback will be considered by the Academic Board at its meeting in October 2005 and will provide an important input into the next round of the strategic planning process and the continuous evaluation and review of the College's quality assurance framework.

The College would like to express its thanks to the audit team and QAA for its professional and constructive approach and for the helpful and thorough commentary on its work provided by the report, which will inform us in the further development and improvement of the management of quality and standards in the College.

