



Promoting higher quality

**The Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education**

Overseas Quality Audit Report

Goldsmiths College,
University of London and
the Institut für
Transpersonale Psychologie
und Kreative Kunsttherapie,
Bern, Switzerland

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Introduction

1 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is a UK organisation that seeks to promote public confidence that the quality of provision and standards of awards in higher education are being safeguarded and enhanced. It provides public information about quality and standards in higher education to meet the needs of students, employers and the funders of higher education. One of QAA's activities is to carry out quality audits of collaborative links between UK higher education institutions and some of their partner organisations in other countries. In the spring and early summer of 2002, QAA audited selected partnership links between UK higher education institutions and institutions in Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. The purpose of the audits was to provide information on the way in which the UK institutions were maintaining academic standards and quality of education in their partnerships with institutions in these countries.

The process of audit of overseas partnership links

2 In February 2001, QAA invited all UK higher education institutions to provide information on their collaborative partnerships. Using this information, QAA approached a number of institutions who had indicated that they had established collaborative links with Danish, German or Swiss partners. Following discussion, a variety of collaborative partnerships was selected for scrutiny. Each of the UK institutions whose collaborative link had been selected for the audit provided a *Commentary* describing the way the partnership operated, and commenting on the effectiveness of the means by which the UK institution assured quality and standards in the link. In addition, each institution was asked, as part of its *Commentary*, to make reference to the extent to which the link was representative of its procedures and practice in all its overseas collaborative activity or specific to the partnership being audited or to the country concerned. Institutions were also invited, in their *Commentaries*, to make reference to the ways in which their arrangements met the expectations of QAA's *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 2: Collaborative provision* (QAA's Code), which took full effect in August 2000.

3 In the spring of 2002, audit visits were made to each UK institution to discuss its arrangements in the light of the *Commentary*. In May 2002, audit teams visited the Danish, German and Swiss partner institutions to gain further insight into the experience of students and staff, and to supplement the view formed by the team from the institution's *Commentary* and from

the UK visit. During the visits to Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, further documentation about the partnerships was made available to the team, and discussions were conducted with key members of staff, lecturers and students. The audit team for this collaborative partnership comprised Dr R Davison, Professor R A Pearce and Professor M P Shaw, auditors. The UK and overseas audit exercise was coordinated for QAA by Dr P J A Findlay and Dr C J Haslam, Assistant Directors, Institutional Review Directorate, QAA. QAA is particularly grateful to the UK institutions and their partners in Denmark, Germany and Switzerland for the willing cooperation provided to the teams.

4 This report describes the audit of the collaborative link between Goldsmiths College, University of London ('Goldsmiths' or 'the College') and the Institut für Transpersonale Psychologie und Kreative Kunsttherapie (Institute for Transpersonal Psychology and Creative Art Therapy) in Bern, Switzerland ('ITP' or 'the Institute'). The audit was conducted on the basis of visits by an audit team to the institutions concerned and on the scrutiny of documentary evidence made available by both the University and the Institute. A series of meetings were held on the 15 March 2002 at the College between members of the audit team and senior staff at Goldsmiths and this was followed by a visit to the Institute on the 8 May 2002, when the team met with staff and students.

5 The most recent QAA audit of Goldsmiths at institutional level took place in 2001. The College's overseas collaborative arrangements have not previously been the subject of an audit.

The background to the collaborative partnership

The partner organisation

6 The link between the College and the Institute is currently based on the validation of a Postgraduate Diploma in Art Psychotherapy. The ITP, established in 1993 under Bern Canton law, is a private organisation with a clinical and educational function. Prior to its foundation, limited art therapy education was offered by the Art School in Bern but ceased in 1993 due to the lack of professional recognition and funding. ITP has offered art therapy education accredited by the Swiss-German Federation for Art Therapy and Creative Psychotherapy (GPK) since that time. It began its search for an academic partner some five years ago and settled on the College because of a personal link between members of staff in the two institutions and because ITP wanted to develop an international dimension to its work. ITP operates from small premises in Bern, which includes studio space,

a modest library and the offices of the Director and the part-time administrator. Lecture rooms are hired in other nearby buildings as required. The agreed annual admissions for the programme at the time of the audit were 20 students.

The history of the collaborative partnership

7 The College has a strong record in provision in the field of art psychotherapy, with programmes accredited by the British Association of Art Therapists and validated by the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine, now the Health Professions Council. The current range of programmes supports a progression from short introductory and foundation courses to post-qualification research. Art psychotherapy is one of 11 areas of study offered within Professional and Community Education (PACE) at the College. The College had previously validated programmes in this professional area delivered by the Kunsttherapie Berlin, in Berlin, and both programmes were approved in 2001. These links and two former partnerships in the same subject area, one in Bologna, Italy and the other in Lausanne, Switzerland, constitute the College's total involvement with overseas collaborative provision.

8 The validated programme at ITP leads to an award of the College, rather than a University of London award. The College is one of eight which are federated to the University of London and received its Royal Charter in 1990. Since 1995, colleges have exercised delegated authority for the approval, administration, quality control and examination arrangements for University of London awards. Until recently the development of collaborative provision and distance learning was restricted in its federated colleges by the University. The College has its own Charter, Statutes and Ordinances and has continued to exercise its right to offer its own awards for the overseas Postgraduate Diplomas in Art Psychotherapy. In terms of its arrangements for the assurance of quality and standards, the College's policy is to make no distinction between the award of degrees on behalf of the University and the award of its own certificates and diplomas.

9 At the time of the audit, the College was in the process of negotiating the termination of two of these partnerships. A 'winding-down' agreement with its Italian partner had been concluded, and the College's relationship with the partner in Lausanne no longer existed. The latter had ceased trading from September 2001 and, at the time of the audit, final discussions were under way for the remaining students to transfer to ITP for completion of the College award. Under new arrangements the College will permit ITP to expand provision at a centre in Lausanne, thereby extending its link with its partner for the education of future groups of students.

10 The Diploma is run at ITP on a part-time basis over four years and was approved in 2001 for a maximum intake of 20 students. It is delivered and assessed in German and currently runs with an annual intake of around 16 students, a total of 54 students being the maximum that the partner can accommodate. The programme aims to provide a sound professional basis for employment within the Swiss health care system, educational institutions and psychosocial agencies.

The College's approach to collaborative provision

11 The College's approach to developing collaborative provision has thus far been responsive to the approaches of European partners within one specialised field rather than being policy-led. During the UK visit the audit team was informed that art psychotherapy educational provision in Europe is variable compared with the UK where it is standardised and professionally led and regulated. Within this context the College considers that its work has become well known and high profile.

12 The College's *Commentary* stated that the quality assurance requirements for collaborative provision 'seek to replicate those in place for other areas of the College's activity'. These have recently been reviewed and more fully developed and are set out in a *Quality Handbook* (the *Handbook*), which includes a checklist of issues that must be covered when considering the suitability of a potential partner. The College aspires to work within a 'culture of vigilance' in which quality assurance is the responsibility of academic, professional and support staff at all levels of the institution, and occurs at the point of delivery'. While certain sanctioned operational variations are permitted within a predetermined quality assurance framework, the College claims that its approach to standards is non-negotiable and firmly controlled centrally. The *Agreement* with the Institute clearly states that the College is responsible for the oversight and maintenance of academic standards.

13 The College's Academic Committee (AC) acts on behalf of Academic Board to approve or validate programmes and to oversee quality and standards matters. Two subcommittees assist AC in this task. The Programme Development Group gives prior and ongoing consideration to financial and resource issues. The Collaborative Provision Subcommittee scrutinises the academic content and structure of the proposed programme. That subcommittee was established in 1998 and replaced the earlier Validation Committee which ceased to function in 1997. Its membership has recently been revised to ensure its central policy role and now comprises the Head of Quality, as senior member of Academic Staff and co-opted members as

appropriate. The audit team formed the impression that the Quality Affairs Office plays a strong role in these arrangements. The team remained unclear, however, about the precise mode of operation of the Collaborative Provision Subcommittee, which appeared to meet on an 'as needs' basis and also to operate as the core panel for validating new collaborative programmes. The minutes of its meetings were not available for scrutiny.

14 The Pro-Warden (Academic) informed the audit team that the College had recently tightened up its arrangements for collaborative ventures. He explained that this had followed 'lessons learnt' from the Bologna and Lausanne partnerships which were set up in the early 1990s. Internally, over the last 18 months the College had clarified the cycle of quality assurance and the relative central and local roles within it, such that 'a separation of the quality assurance function and the running of the link' had been achieved. PACE, which had in the past operated with devolved authority for collaborative provision, was now responsible for the day-to-day running of the link within centrally defined policy and guidelines and a central committee structure. In the team's meetings with the senior staff of the College, it was confirmed that the College considered that it had final responsibility for the quality and standards of its award at ITP, and the formal agreement with ITP contains explicitly defined responsibilities of each partner at institutional and programme level.

15 The College requires programme monitors to be appointed with responsibility for each programme of study. Within PACE, because of its size and the complexity of its flexible provision, programme coordinators are also appointed to manage and oversee discrete areas of academic activity. A formal role description for the Programme Coordinator was available to the audit team and it defined a wide-ranging and demanding set of duties. The Programme Coordinator explained to the team that, in practice, her role entails keeping in touch on an informal and friendly basis with the partner, as well as checking reports and providing advice as necessary.

16 The College's annual system of programme monitoring with outcomes reported to AC has recently been established for collaborative provision. The audit team noted from committee papers that there had been concern that the monitoring of collaborative programmes had not in the past been sufficiently robust. The College has taken action to address this, such that partners receive guidance via the *Handbook* and are required to appoint programme monitors who must operate within the College's monitoring framework. For these purposes the partner institution is viewed as having the same responsibilities as departments and programme teams

within the College and, in particular, is expected to provide an annual report on the operation of the programme. The team noted a letter from the College sent six months after the validation, with an enclosed copy of the new *Handbook* reminding ITP that a Programme Monitor should be appointed. No doubt in future the College will wish to ensure that the formal arrangements surrounding this key role are put in place in a timely manner.

17 The audit team sought information relating to the College's approach to QAA's *Code*. The College has established a Quality and Standards Working Party, a College-wide monitoring body with responsibility for assuring compliance with QAA's *Code*. This allocates sections of the *Code* to appropriate parties and requires responses on compliance. A 'grid analysis' for the precepts of the *Code* and the work to date undertaken by the Collaborative Provision Subcommittee was presented to the team as evidence. The College considered that for the most part it was adhering to the precepts but certain areas had been highlighted for action. Some changes had been made to the procedures for the initial approval of partner institutions, the content of the written agreement, and the ongoing academic and administrative contact with and management of the linked provision. The College had identified further action as necessary to revise the agreements in place so as to clarify the College's residual obligations to students upon termination of the link. The grid also signalled that the College sought to exercise more control over the nature and content of information provided to students between the revalidation visits. Senior staff at the College acknowledged to the team in discussion that there were also issues with regard to the appointment of the Visiting Examiner and assuring comparability of standards of the award (see paragraph 48 below).

18 The *Commentary* stated that 'the arrangements for the approval, monitoring and review of the validated postgraduate diploma in Art Psychotherapy delivered at ITP in Bern are representative of those currently in place for the College's portfolio of collaborative provision'. Since the total provision is small and confined to one specialist field in PACE, the College has little against which to benchmark its approach to ITP.

19 In its *Commentary*, the College claimed to have strengthened its quality assurance policies and processes over recent years and acknowledged that the development and formalisation of arrangements for collaborative provision had, in some respects, lagged behind. The theme was one of reliance in the past on the informal and a movement more recently to formal centrally defined approaches to developing and managing collaborative provision. The audit team concurred with this analysis and noted the steps which

had been taken to articulate and strengthen the validation process, bring the validated collaborative programmes into the College's standard monitoring system, clarify roles and responsibilities and provide guidelines to staff in its *Handbook*.

The establishment and management of the collaborative partnership

Selection of the partner

20 The College developed comprehensive guidelines for the approval of collaborative provision in 1999. These included the requirement that the College was satisfied with the financial probity and good standing of the proposed partner as well as fit with mission. The College is currently seeking to strengthen the role of its finance office in the validation process. The audit team would encourage the College to make progress on this matter to ensure that the costing of its overseas ventures gives due attention to development and ongoing monitoring costs.

The approval process

21 The audit team noted that the approval process for validated programmes as defined in the College's *Handbook* was clear and thorough. All new programmes and major changes to existing programmes require the approval of Academic Board. The originating department through its head undertakes the preliminary work. The Programme Development Group covering internal and collaborative provision, considers strategic issues including fit with mission, market demand and finance, before the proposal goes to the Collaborative Subcommittee. The Collaborative Subcommittee then oversees the curriculum and academic issues.

22 The audit team noted that the *Handbook* recommends a minimum of 12 months for the planning and approvals process. The formal record of the development of the link with ITP showed a much slower process of initial engagement. According to correspondence seen by the team at the College, the first approach from ITP was contained in a letter dated January 1997. The proposal was considered and a letter followed in July 1998 inviting ITP to submit a final application. A Validation Panel then visited ITP and reported on their visit in June 2000, and Academic Board gave approval in March 2001. The first intake to the course was in October 2001, almost five years after the first approach.

23 The *Commentary* stated that in the validation process, any curriculum differences related to the social, cultural and political context of art therapy

clinical practice and the educational mores of the country in question are 'carefully considered' to ensure comparability of quality and standards. External readers are used by the College to verify the appropriateness of the level and content of the curriculum. A validation visit to the proposed partner is undertaken by the Collaborative Provision Subcommittee to 'assess the ability of the partner to deliver the stated aims and objectives of the programme and to ensure comparability with the quality of similar programmes offered by the College'. The visit includes meetings with students. The report relating to the ITP visit and validation panel meeting was made available to the audit team and confirmed that the College had sought to establish the satisfactory quality of the programme at Bern, its staff and facilities.

24 The validation report listed conditions that had to be met before approval. The College places responsibility on the programme team to progress these and to report on them to AC. The audit team was unable to find evidence of the formal consideration of the conditions by AC but staff assured them that they had been met. However, the team was concerned to find on its visit to Bern that one significant condition, for ITP to provide learning outcomes for the whole programme as well as for discrete elements, appeared not yet to have been undertaken. Several conditions referred to the necessity for ITP to translate documents into English, but the Director of ITP told the team that he was not aware of this requirement and that he had submitted the required documents in German. The College will wish to consider whether its systems for supporting partners to understand and meet conditions and for monitoring the process are sufficiently robust.

Periodic review and amendments to initial programme

25 The ITP link is in the early stages of development. In accordance with the College's requirements for all of its programmes, it will be subject to periodic review every five years. Evidence of this process was available relating to the review of the previous link in Lausanne and here the audit team noted that 16 conditions had to be met before re-approval. When these were not met, the Pro-Warden had set a special investigation in motion. Since the partnership collapsed for other reasons, this was not finally followed through. Senior staff of the College told the team that they regarded as 'alarming' the number of conditions that had been set and that this was a significant factor in the subsequent attention of the College to the tightening up of its quality assurance procedures for overseas collaborative provision. The College will wish to ensure that it remains fully informed of issues and changes which arise during the five-year period of engagement rather than only at its end.

Written agreements

26 The College's partnerships are covered by formal written agreements. These are generally compliant with the relevant precept of QAA's *Code* except for the omission of a clause registering the College's residual obligations to students. The College is aware of the need to address this, especially in view of its experience with an earlier link.

Certificates and transcripts

27 The College retains responsibility for issuing award certificates. These identify the place of study and the language of delivery, thus conforming to QAA *Code* requirements. It has been agreed that the College will award certificates retrospectively to students already studying on the programme at the time of the validation. The audit team learnt in Bern that ITP also awards its own intermediate certificate to those students who complete four semesters of the programme and a certificate to those who complete the whole programme. The team confirmed that no confusion existed at ITP or among its students as to the differing status of the awards.

Publicity and marketing of the collaborative partnership

28 The College's grid on compliance with QAA's *Code* (see above, paragraph 17) identified control over publicity as an issue to be resolved. The revised agreements now in place are more explicit than they were previously in respect of the College's control over publicity and promotional activity. Recently, a new protocol had been developed involving the College's external communications office to ensure a robust method of checking materials. The audit team was informed in Bern that ITP does not advertise other than through its web site, which had been checked by the College.

Quality of learning opportunities and student support

29 The formal responsibilities of the College and the Institute are set out in the *Agreement* between the partners. The Institute's responsibilities, in terms of day-to-day operation, include the promotion of the programme, the admission and enrolment of students, the appointment of staff, the management of the programme, student assessment and the quality of the learning environment. The College's main roles relate to the oversight and maintenance of standards, including the appointment of the Visiting Examiner and overseeing assessment, and the maintenance of student records.

30 The College had identified that there had been earlier confusion in communications with collaborative partners 'through a multiplicity of dialogues' and that this matter had now been resolved. This had been achieved by clarifying and formalising the role of the Programme Coordinator with responsibility for the programme, and identifying an administrator to function as the 'hinge' between the College and the partner for day-to-day management purposes. The audit team was informed during its UK visit that significant progress had been made as a result. In practice it appeared that the main line of communication was with an academic member of staff at the College who was personally known to the Director of ITP and who had supported the development of the link from the beginning, but the Programme Coordinator was also known to the ITP staff though her visits to Bern. It was not clear to the team that the Coordinator role as a point of reference had yet become well established with staff at the Institute. The team recognised that ITP was a small operation with a close group of staff, of which the majority were working on a part-time basis, and that it was therefore not surprising that communication was informal in many respects; nevertheless, the College will wish to ensure that the appropriate formal channels of communication are used for significant matters relating to the operation of the partnership.

31 During their visit to Bern, the audit team was told that the College avoided intrusive demands and respected the independent operation of ITP, although there is fairly regular email and telephone contact. Administrative records are kept 'in a Goldsmiths file' and the College had not so far asked to look at them. Academic staff at the Institute reported their satisfaction with the visits that had occurred in the development of the link, including a recent panel visit from the College prior to the audit. They considered that the College had worked in a facilitative way with them to adopt a more formal and rigorous approach without imposing its structures on them.

32 The clinical placements, during which time students work as trainee art therapists, form an essential component of the programme. The validation report commented on the significant difference between the structure and supervision arrangements for placements operated by ITP as compared with the UK. These were due mainly to the requirements of the GPK accreditation that supervision of the placement is located in the placement practice. The College invited ITP to consider bringing the structure of placements closer to its own and to find ways for greater liaison between ITP staff and placement supervisors. In discussion with the audit team, however, the staff at ITP did not seem to be aware that there were any issues to be addressed. They explained to the team that

the College 'trusts' them on the matter of placements in the context of the long tradition of this type of activity. It was not clear to the team that the supervision arrangements at ITP had received any active consideration with a view to change. The College may wish to consider further whether it is appropriate to pursue this advisory recommendation contained in its validation report.

Monitoring and review

33 For its internal programmes, the College evaluates the quality of learning opportunities and student support through its annual programme monitoring process culminating in a distilled report of generic issues to Academic Board. Programme monitoring has existed since 1995 and has been subject to refinement since. This depends upon the appointment of a Programme Monitor who is knowledgeable but maintains a level of independence to report on the programme. The Programme Monitoring Committee for each programme, essentially a staff-student consultative group, meets at least twice a year. The Programme Monitor is then required to write an annual report drawing on those meetings, which is endorsed by the Programme Monitoring Committee. Copies of the report are considered by the Departmental Board (in this case by the PACE Board) and the Quality Affairs Office. Evidence provided to the audit team indicated that for College-based programmes, accommodation, library facilities and student support issues had been considered and resolved by the Board. However, from its examination of committee papers and the programme monitoring report for one of the former links, the team formed the view that consideration of learning and student support for overseas collaborative provision, once having been evaluated at validation, was not a strong feature in reporting of Academic Board's considerations. The *Commentary* indicated that the College is aware that it needs to strengthen its approach to programme monitoring for its collaborative provision. In doing so, the College will wish to ensure that the information received regularly through the monitoring process for its overseas collaborative provision is sufficient to enable it adequately to safeguard the quality and standards of the validated programmes.

34 As part of the validation process, ITP undertook to provide annual reports about the programme, the content of which would be specified by the College, and which would include samples of student evaluations. The audit team was interested to learn whether the College would provide staff development to support this process. It was informed that the role had been explained at validation but the College had no plans to train the ITP Programme Monitor as is

done internally for staff at the College assuming that role. The team learnt in Bern that as required by the College, a Programme Monitor had recently been appointed who would be visiting the College in due course to secure further guidance, particularly as preparation for the submission of the annual report. The team considered this to be a helpful development and encourages the College to establish such supportive mechanisms to ensure that its partner is well informed of expectations and the College better able to track issues as they arise.

35 The monitoring arrangements already in place internally at ITP consist of student evaluation of the programme at the end of each semester, annual meetings of the whole staff and student body and three yearly quality assurance visits from the GPK. The Validation Report for ITP considered that these were sufficient to meet the requirements of the College's programme monitoring system although requiring Academic Board approval 'for this variant'. The audit team were assured by ITP students that they were content with the opportunities ITP provides for them to feed back on issues both formally and informally.

36 The College's *Commentary* recognised the need for a closer alignment of regular evaluation activity with the processes used for other College programmes. While acknowledging that the development of the monitoring and reporting relationship was at a very early stage, the audit team would confirm the view that the arrangements for monitoring and review will benefit from more formal communication, clearer guidelines and continuing support.

Staffing and staff development

37 According to the *Agreement* ITP is responsible for the appointment of staff to the programme. The Director of ITP explained to the audit team that the College has never questioned his recruitment procedures and that currently he is seeking to reduce the large number of part-time staff with which his institution operates. The College requires that staff curricula vitae are presented as part of the validation process and that some staff be met by the panel at the validation event. The team found that thereafter there was no requirement for partners to notify staff changes. The College is invited to revisit this issue as part of the development of its collaborative provision procedures so as to ensure that it has a record of all staff teaching on its award.

38 The *Agreement* makes clear that ITP is responsible for staff development, while Goldsmiths will provide an academic member of staff to visit for the purpose of teaching and/or internal assessment for a maximum of three days each year. Discussion with staff at the

College confirmed that this, together with validation meetings were the key structures for staff development relating to the delivery of the programme. However, it was not clear to the audit team that the visits which had thus far taken place had been able to address any systematic staff development, and they appeared to have concentrated more on exchange of teaching. The College might want to reflect on whether it has built in sufficient development opportunities for the staff of its partner who were clearly receptive to receiving more guidance than has yet been provided.

39 The audit team noted the enthusiasm expressed by PACE staff for its European links as productive in developing academic discourse and collegiality and developing the subject of art therapy internationally as well as widening the professional framework. A research network for staff and students was in the early stages of becoming established. Such developments were not yet apparent in relation to ITP and were possibly hampered by language issues. The team was told that when the College visits ITP, interpreters were always necessary and that academic staff from ITP felt inhibited from visiting the College because of English language problems. Thus far, only one member of the teaching staff from the College has visited ITP, and while this was appreciated, the arrangements have not yet quite fulfilled the expectations of the Institute for an international dimension to the link.

40 The recent panel visit to ITP identified in its report 'that more frequent face-to face meetings' between academic staff from the partner and the College would be helpful. It recommended that in addition to the three contracted days there should be an annual meeting at which the College Coordinator and the ITP Director would meet with staff and students from Bern and Lausanne to focus on academic issues. The report also recognised that a more active programme of staff exchanges would facilitate staff development for both partners. In the light of the evidence, the audit team would encourage the College to follow these recommendations with a view to securing a stronger ongoing relationship with its partner.

Information to, and support for, students

41 Academic staff at the College assured the audit team that students are informed about their rights in relation to complaints and appeals, and received this and other information in a *Handbook* which is similar to the Goldsmiths' *Student Handbook*. However, although the report of the validation had noted that the Institute's publication should provide more information and that this should be supported, no changes had yet been made. Perhaps as a result of this, students at ITP did not seem to be aware that as a registered student

with Goldsmiths they had rights of appeal beyond ITP, and the team were unable to identify any reference to this in the ITP publications. In general, participants in the ITP programme were uncertain about what being a 'Goldsmiths' student might mean, other than in terms of the ultimate value of the award. They were aware that there might be a possibility for them to visit the College (and indeed that some students had done so), but not whether they would be entitled to use its facilities. They identified to some extent with Goldsmiths, but would have liked to have received more formal confirmation from the College of their status, and more information about it. The team formed the view from its discussion with staff and students at ITP that there had been a very limited level of information conveyed by the College directly to them, although it was noted that the Director plays a key intermediary role in this respect. The team recognised from its discussions at Goldsmiths that the College was aware that it needed to improve its control over the nature and content of information provided to students. In view of its findings at ITP, the team strongly encourages the College to make progress on this matter.

Assurance of the standards of the awards

Standards of students at entry

42 The *Agreement* states that ITP is responsible for the promotion of the programme and the recruitment of students to it. The College has provided ITP with its entry requirements and is consulted if these are varied to admit students as special cases. The students are enrolled at ITP and registered at the College. At the time of the audit they had not received any confirmation from the College apart from a bill for fees. They would have liked to receive formal confirmation of registration to endorse their membership of the College.

43 The audit team was informed in Bern that ITP is responsible for the first year of the programme and treats the first semester as 'provisional' so that students can assess the programme's suitability for them as well as being assessed for their aptitude to continue. The Director assured the team that the College is kept informed about any students who do not progress.

Language of delivery and assessment

44 The programme is currently delivered and assessed in German. ITP regard it as helpful if students can read in other languages, including English, to access some of the art therapy literature, but such skills are not part of the entry requirements. The audit team was informed that about one-third of the students are competent in English. The majority of Swiss citizens are

at least bilingual and, following changes in the student cohort, current debates at ITP about the language of delivery and assessment are veering more towards French as the preferred option. The team found only cursory reference to the issue of the language of delivery and assessment in the validation process and in subsequent considerations by the College. There was some expectation that meetings would be conducted in English and that documents would be translated where required, but no significant provision had been made for translation. The team found this to be a matter of some concern, as the obstacles to communication thus incurred had a significant impact both on communication at the subject level and on the College's capacity to moderate or scrutinise the work produced by ITP students. The College may therefore wish to give more thorough consideration to the implications of the language issue, particularly in the context of control of standards.

Equivalence of standards

45 The audit team sought clarification over Goldsmiths' approach to its overseas validation given the variability of a number of course programmes involved within the same subject area. The Head of Quality Audit explained that all the programmes are different but that there are important similarities in respect of the award title, the monitoring arrangements and examination board process - 'fixed points where standards are applied, but within a local framework which takes the local culture into account'. The philosophy is one where 'the academic standards are comparable, but specific to the cultural environment'. The team was interested to learn how the comparability of standards was secured. The College considers that this is determined during the validation process through, for example, attention to comparable learning outcomes and that comparability will become more clearly articulated when programme specifications and benchmark standards are in place. As had been noted, work on learning outcomes remains to be done. (see paragraph 24 above) It was evident to the team that, at this stage, staff at ITP were unsure how the College compared the standards of the ITP programme with its own programme although they recognised that this would have to happen. In the absence of any such systematic means of comparing the ITP programme more closely with internal College provision and other UK programmes, and given also the difficulty of close communication between subject colleagues, the team believed that the College would find it difficult to demonstrate consistency and comparability of standards. The College will wish to consider how it can make more rapid progress with the comparison of learning outcomes and assessment strategies.

The assessment of students

46 At validation the College judged that the assessment regime of ITP was rigorous and thorough. It has delegated a high degree of responsibility for student assessment to ITP. This consists of both written and practical elements followed by feedback to students. There is in place a system for internal double-marking in some areas of the programme, but there is no arrangement for any moderation by staff from the College. Students assured the audit team that they are provided with very clear instructions as to what is expected and were appreciative of the recent introduction of explicit grade criteria, which had come about as a result of the link. The team was provided with a set of guidelines issued by ITP to students on the full range of assignments and the timetable for submitting them. The timing of assessments has been changed to fit in with the College's system of examining and, although this has created problems for ITP, staff and students considered that the added discipline of working to the required deadlines was an improvement. The team noted the appreciative comments of staff and students concerning the more formalised and structured approach to delivery and assessment of the programme brought about by the link.

External examiners and examination boards

47 Consistent with internal requirements at Goldsmiths, the College appoints visiting examiners to partner validated programmes, and the rules and regulations relating to appointment and reporting are the same as for UK-based examiners. The Visiting Examiner is required to approve the form and content of formal written examination papers. Because they have not yet had students taking examinations on the validated programme, staff at ITP were not sure whether they would have to clear their examination papers with the Visiting Examiner in due course. The College will no doubt want to clarify its expectations in this respect and to prepare its partner to provide appropriate responses to the Visiting Examiner's reports, since the reports and responses to them are viewed as vital to the maintenance of the College's academic standards.

48 The audit team noted that the College has a rigorous system for appointing its internal visiting examiners. The Visiting Examiner appointed for the ITP diploma programme is a German-speaking academic residing in Switzerland, and is considered by the College to be appropriate in terms of language skills and subject knowledge. The *Commentary* made clear that the College was aware that this arrangement limits the possibility of direct comparison of standards of achievement with its own or similar art therapy

diplomas based in the UK. It considered that this is somewhat mitigated by the experience of the current Visiting Examiner who was trained in the UK, and that an appointment from within the UK for a culturally-specific and specialised subject area was 'not always possible or desirable'. Both partners agreed that the prospects of finding a German speaking UK examiner with the relevant subject expertise are remote. Notwithstanding these views, the team considered that the current arrangement posed considerable problems for the College. Since it currently made no provision for moderation by its own staff of ITP assessments, and had not envisaged that any translation of assessments would be used, the College would be dependent entirely upon its Visiting Examiner for judgements relating to standards.

49 Although the *Commentary* clearly stated that the responsibility for quality and standards lay with the College, the audit team found that within the partnership there was a very substantial level of delegation to ITP and its staff for the management of provision, of assessment, and thus of academic standards. Other than through the reports of the Visiting Examiner, it was not clear to the team how the College would currently be able to assure itself reliably concerning the achievements of students at ITP. The appointment of an external examiner with no recent experience of UK higher education therefore made it very difficult for the College to establish equivalence of standards, and left it considerably exposed. The College will wish to consider other methods for checking comparability of standards, including the possibility of its own staff moderating assessments for a defined period; it may also wish to consider further ways of strengthening the external examiner arrangements for the programme.

50 The audit team also noted with interest that ITP employs its own external examiner, and ITP staff assured the team that it would be willing to make its internal external examiner reports available to the College.

51 The College works with a two-tier examination system which is designed to allow close scrutiny of individual cases through a sub-board, and wider consideration of standards issues at the College Board, which decides upon final results and oversees comparability of attainment across the College. The ITP programme has its own sub-board, normally to be held in Bern, and this is chaired by the Head of PACE and serviced by College administrators. At the time of the audit, the first such meeting was still to be held following the first year of delivery at ITP, and the Institute's staff were aware that the sub-board would take place in Bern but not yet of what its function and format would be.

Conclusions

52 The collaborative partnership between Goldsmiths College, University of London (the College) and the Institut für Transpersonale Psychologie und Kreative Kunsttherapie, Bern, Switzerland (ITP or 'the Institute') is based on the validation of a Postgraduate Diploma in Art Psychotherapy. The four year part-time diploma programme offered by the Institute was validated in 2000 and the first cohort recruited 16 students. The link is relatively modest in scope and still in its early stages; the audit recognised, however, that the partnership was similar to others in the same subject area which had previously been validated by the College.

53 The College's *Commentary* on the partnership, together with the supporting documentation supplied and discussions with staff and students, provided considerable evidence of the development and current status of the partnership. The *Commentary* was a well-written and informative document which recognised in its evaluation both the strengths of the current quality assurance arrangements and those areas where change and development was appropriate. It acknowledged that the development and formalisation of the College's arrangements for collaborative provision had, in some respects, lagged behind internal developments. The theme was one of reliance in the past on informal arrangements, and a movement more recently to formal centrally defined approaches to developing and managing collaborative provision. The evidence available to the audit team supported this analysis and note was taken of the steps to articulate and strengthen the validation process, to bring the validated collaborative programmes into the College's standard monitoring system, to clarify roles and responsibilities and to provide guidelines to staff in the College's *Quality Handbook*. Many of these improvements are still underway and will need attention during the period of consolidation. Given the small amount of collaborative provision in its portfolio and its concentration in one specialised area, the College is to be commended for the action it has taken to formalise its procedures and secure an institutional overview of its overseas programmes. It is encouraged to further strengthen its approach by taking steps to ensure that these formal requirements do not become a substitute for dynamic engagement with its partner institutions on an ongoing basis.

54 The audit took place at an early stage in the development of the link, but positive features in the partnership were already evident, and these included the appreciation by staff and students at the Institute concerning the sensitive and considerate way in which the College had communicated with them on the visits that had taken place; the resultant changes to the delivery and assessment of the programme that had

occurred, leading to a greater degree of formality which the Institute considered to be beneficial; the enthusiasm expressed for further development of the link by both partners and the willingness of ITP to learn from the College.

55 The College places particular importance in its quality assurance arrangements upon the approval process, which gives it confidence to trust its partner and to delegate authority for most aspects of the delivery and assessment of the validated programme. Such a concern for laying a sound foundation for the link is commendable but it also needs to be backed up by further continuing support. The College will, therefore, wish to give attention to a number of areas for further development, including ensuring that conditions for the approval of a programme are clearly communicated and followed up; and ensuring that the expectations regarding programme monitoring are fully understood. The quality assurance procedures to support the link are basically sound with regard to the formal stages, but should now be further strengthened, especially with regard to the need for continuing overview of the operation of the programme following approval. Notwithstanding the trust it wishes to place in its partner, this ongoing monitoring is necessary to ensure that the College is exercising its responsibility for quality and standards. In assuring the academic standards of its award, the College will also need to give more attention to the consequences of approving the assessment of the programme in a language other than English, and to ensuring that its procedures for external scrutiny are able to provide the necessary information relating to comparability of standards.

56 The College will also wish, as it improves further its management of the link, to review the extent to which its staff are able to work closely with colleagues at the Institute to clarify expectations and to provide guidance. This is to be encouraged in order to underpin the quality and standards of the award and for academic staff development purposes. The College will also no doubt give attention to the quality of information provided to students of the Institute concerning their status and rights.

57 On the basis of the evidence made available, the findings of the audit suggest that in the context of this collaborative partnership initial confidence may be placed in the College's management of quality. The College's stewardship of the standards of its validated award is currently 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; until the College is able to address this matter more thoroughly, only qualified confidence can be placed in the management of standards for this partnership.

