Courtauld Institute of Art

DECEMBER 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 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance,* published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The audit team reviews progress towards meeting this requirement.

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

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Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the Courtauld Institute of Art (the Institute) from 28 November to 1 December 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 offered.

To arrive at its conclusions the audit team spoke to members of staff throughout the Institute and to current students, and read a wide range of documents relating to the way the Institute 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 award (for example, a degree). It should be at a similar level across the United Kingdom.

Academic quality is a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them achieve their awards. It is about making sure that appropriate 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 Institute is that:

- broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the Institute'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 area as being good practice:

- the success of the Institute's informal and formal course evaluation mechanisms in responding to student opinion.

Recommendations for action

The audit team recommends that the Institute 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 team advises the Institute to:

- clarify the leadership and managerial responsibilities of all senior academic and administrative staff
- redefine the responsibilities and reporting lines of its committees
- review assessment policies and procedures to ensure clarity and consistency of application
- clarify the locus of responsibility for ensuring consistent engagement with the Academic Infrastructure
- provide an annual planning statement to set and monitor strategic and operational priorities and targets
- standardise the structure of periodic review reports and formal response mechanisms
- ensure consistency across all academic programmes by establishing appropriate management committees with clearly defined functions.

It would be desirable for the Institute to:

- review its approach to external relations to realise their full potential for the Institute and its students
- establish consistent policies and procedures for gathering and evaluating student, graduate and employer feedback
- develop more formal procedures for using and evaluating management information
- establish an Institute-wide approach to careers education, information and guidance.

Summary outcomes of the discipline audit trail: History of Art

The audit team looked at the MA History of Art to establish how well the Institute's systems and

procedures were working at the discipline level. The Institute provided the team with documents, including examples of student work, and the team spoke to staff and students. As well as confirming the overall confidence statements given above, the team considered that the standard of student achievement in the MA History of Art was appropriate to the title of the award and its place in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The team considered the quality of the learning opportunities available to students suitable for a programme of study leading to this award.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings the audit team investigated the use made by the Institute 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 define both good practice and academic standards. The findings of the audit suggest that the Institute 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.

In due course the institutional audit process will include a check on the reliability of the information set published by institutions in the format recommended in the Higher Education Funding Council for England's document *HEFCE 03/51, Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance.* The findings of the audit are that, at the time of the audit, the Institute was alert to the requirements set out in document *HEFCE 03/51* and, though it had some way to go, was addressing its responsibilities in this respect.

Main report

Main report

1   An institutional audit of the Courtauld Institute of Art (the Institute) was undertaken during the period 28 November to 1 December 2005. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the Institute's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility as an awarding body.

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 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 Institute'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 and for publishing reliable information. As part of the audit process, in accordance with protocols agreed with HEFCE, SCOP and UUK the audit included consideration of an example of the operation of institutional processes at programme level through a discipline audit trail (DAT), together with examples of those processes functioning at the level of the institution as a whole. The scope of the audit encompassed all provision leading to the Institute's awards.

Section 1: Introduction: the Courtauld Institute of Art

The Institution and its mission

4   The Courtauld Institute of Art (the Institute) was founded in 1932 as a Senate Institute of the London University for the study of the history and conservation of art and to promote research. In 1989 the Institute moved from its original home in Portman Square to Somerset House. In addition to the resources of the University of London and its constituent colleges, the Institute benefits from an exceptionally fine collection comprising the Witt Library (photographic), the Conway Library (art and architecture), the Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, the Hermitage Rooms, and audiovisual slide and book libraries.

5   On 1 April 2002 the Institute became an independent self-governing college of the University of London, bound by the University's Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations. It awards University of London degrees to its students, taking full responsibility for meeting the University's standards and quality assurance procedures.

6   The Institute's Mission Statement claims it is a world-class centre of intellectual enquiry in the fields of the history and conservation of art and architecture, and that it fosters and advances the understanding, care and enjoyment of the visual arts through a distinctive combination of advanced research, specialist teaching, exceptional libraries and visual resources, outstanding galleries and diverse public programmes.

7   The Institute has 377 full-time equivalent (FTE) students, of whom 65.5 FTE are research students. The bulk of taught students are studying for the BA (Hons) History of Art (136.5 FTE), MA History of Art (112 FTE) and the Graduate Diploma in the History of Art (27 FTE), the remainder being registered for two small intake programmes in easel and wall painting conservation. The majority of students are full-time, almost a quarter originate from overseas and some 77 per cent are aged 21 or over. They are taught, for the most part, by 31 permanent teaching staff, supported by a range of visiting lecturers, post doctoral fellows and teaching assistants. Collectively the Institute's academic staff cover the art and architecture of the Western World from classical antiquity to the present, and have specialist expertise in the conservation of easel and wall paintings.

8   The Institute, which, other than in the cases of two small conservation departments and, arguably, History of Art, has no internal subdivision into faculties, schools or departments, is led by the Director, the current incumbent having taken up her post in October 2004. The Director is supported by two deputy directors (Head of Studies and Research Forum), the Secretary and Registrar, Academic Registrar, Head of Academic Information Services (who leads a number of small sections, each with its own head), Senior Curator, Director of Development and Director of Finance. Its strategic direction is shaped by the Director in consultation with an advisory group of senior staff (see paragraph 20) and Academic Board, and subject to the formal approval of the Governing Board. The Strategic Plan places considerable emphasis on the Institute's quest for external partners to expand its activities and range, noting that its partnerships with the Getty Trust and the State Heritage Museum offer outstanding opportunities to benefit from joint intellectual endeavour and to access outstanding collections pertinent to its mission.

9   The Institute acknowledged in its self-evaluation document (SED) that recent changes in senior personnel, which include having had three directors in three years, have put management and administration under considerable pressure. It stated that the preparation of its SED had been its first opportunity to present a considered and reflective self-assessment of provision, procedures, systems and future plans since acquiring college status. The current Strategic Plan identifies Institute-wide restructuring as essential if time is to be created for senior staff to deliver their components of the plan, and indicates that the current system, whereby the Director personally line manages all academic staff and functional directors, is under review.

Collaborative provision

10   While the Institute has a large number of associations with other institutions, these are mainly matters of research or business. Its only collaborative provision as defined by QAA involves the provision of language teaching for first-year undergraduates by another University of London college under that college's quality arrangements and the provision on one occasion, by the Wallace Collection, of a specialist option in the MA History of Art under the Institute's procedures - a facility which, however, may again be available in the future. While staff expressed general interest in exploring the possibility of collaborative agreements in future, and the Strategic Plan makes a commitment to doing so, the audit team formed the view that this is not currently an institutional priority.

Background information

11   The published information available for this audit included the information on the Institute's website, comprising programme prospectuses and the reports of a quality assessment of the History of Art, Architecture and Design programme conducted by QAA in October 1997 and of a quality audit concluded by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) in July 1993.

12   The Institute initially provided QAA with an SED and a discipline self-evaluation document (DSED) to support the DAT. In addition, during the briefing and audit visits it provided a range of internal documents in hard copy and through its intranet. In the course of the audit the Institute provided ready access to supporting information, including documentation relating to the selected DAT, and compiled a small sample of students' assessed work. The audit was also informed by the students' written submission (SWS), prepared on a non-confidential basis and expressing views on the student experience, the level of representation afforded them and the extent to which their views are noted and acted upon, and identifying matters relevant to the quality of programmes and the academic standards of awards. The audit team is grateful to those responsible for preparing it.

The audit process

13   Following a preliminary meeting at the Institute, QAA confirmed that one DAT would

be conducted, focusing on the MA History of Art. The SED and SWS were received in September 2005, the DSED, constituting documentation relating to the most recent periodic review, in October 2005.

14   The audit team visited the Institute on 27 and 28 October 2005 to undertake a briefing visit for the purpose of exploring with the Director, her senior colleagues and student representatives matters relating to the management of quality and standards raised in the SED, SWS and other documentation, and to ensure that it had properly understood these materials. At the end of the visit a programme of meetings was submitted to the Institute in preparation for the audit visit itself. The audit team did not select any area for thematic enquiry.

15   The audit visit took place from 28 November to 1 December 2005 and included further meetings with staff and students of the Institute, both at the institutional level and in relation to the DAT. The audit team comprised Professor H Griffiths, Mr P Lloyd, Mr C McIntyre, Ms L Staley-Brookes, auditors, and Ms J Main, audit secretary. The audit was coordinated for QAA by Professor R Harris, Assistant Director, Reviews Group.

Developments since the previous audit

16   The Institute was not subject to continuation audit, although as a Senate Institute of the University of London it participated in a quality audit conducted by HEQC in 1993. Its acquisition of self-governing collegiate status within the University of London in 2002 gave the Institute a separate legal identity and brought it within the auspices of institutional audit. The HEQC report highlighted a number of commendable activities and quality assurance procedures, but also listed 16 issues to which the Institute was invited to give further thought. Over 12 years have passed since this audit and, by agreement with QAA, the Institute did not specifically reference it in its SED or provide details of actions undertaken. Nonetheless, it was apparent to the audit team that while the Institute had responded positively to many

aspects of the report, in other areas of activity, all of which are addressed in this report, there continues to be scope for further development. The Institute did state in its SED, however, that the 1996 and 2001 research assessment exercises and the 1997 Teaching Quality Assessment have had a significant impact on its approach to quality assurance.

Section 2: The audit investigations: institutional processes

The institution's view as expressed in the SED

17   The Institute stated in its SED that following its change of status to a self-governing college of the University of London in 2002, extensive work has gone into establishing, maintaining, revising and enhancing all aspects of quality assurance. Ultimate responsibility for quality assurance lies with Academic Board, with quality assurance of programmes being the primary responsibility of its major subcommittee, the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) (see also paragraph 26). Responsibility for the academic standards of awards lies with examinations boards, chaired by the Head of Examinations. The Institute places great value on external inputs to its quality processes, and this is achieved through the rigorous reviewing of programmes by external academics and by their extensive participation in internal committees. Responsibility for implementing these arrangements lies with the Academic Registry.

18   The Institute further stated in its SED that while an overarching framework for the maintenance of quality exists, the small size of the Institute and the fact that all academic staff are members of Academic Board lead the institution as a whole to consider in great detail all strategic and operational aspects of quality management. While in its SED the Institute drew attention to the benefits deriving from this it also pointed out that these procedures are currently so extensive that there is a danger

of them overwhelming academics' research and teaching commitments.

The institution's framework for managing quality and standards

19   The Governing Board, responsible for all matters related to general governance, has a number of subcommittees. Academic Board has overall responsibility for the approval of academic programmes or courses (modules) and for confirming the policies, criteria, procedures, and guidelines for the implementation and management of all quality assurance and academic standards requirements. The Director chairs Academic Board's monthly meetings; membership comprises all permanent academic staff, the Head of Academic Information Services, the Secretary and Registrar, the Senior Curator of the Gallery and the Head of Learning at Somerset House, together with external and student members.

20   The Director, as chief executive and accounting officer, is responsible to the Governing Board for the effective management and academic direction of the Institute within the overall policies and requirements specified in the Strategic Plan. The Director is supported and advised by a senior team, constituted as a Director's Advisory Group (DAG) and comprising the two deputy directors, the Secretary and Registrar, the Deputy Secretary and Academic Registrar, the Director of Finance, the Director of Development, the Head of Academic Information Services and the Senior Curator of the Gallery. At the time of the audit visit the Institute was undertaking a review of its structures, including the future roles and responsibilities of DAG and its members, in the context of the Strategic Plan.

21   The Deputy Director (Research) provides senior level academic and managerial support in all aspects of research policy and culture and activities; the Deputy Director (Head of Studies) is responsible for overseeing the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and for chairing the Teaching and Learning, Research Degrees, Admissions and Widening Participation and Scholarships Committees.

22   Responsibility for programme delivery and development within the Institute's four main historic periods of study, Classical/Byzantine/Medieval, Renaissance, Early Modern and Modern, lies with a rotationally appointed head. In addition, the undergraduate, master's and graduate diploma programmes each has a head of programme area, and both conservation departments have a board of studies. The audit team was advised that senior academic and administrative roles and responsibilities, as they relate to the quality framework, are continuing to be refined and that additional posts, including that of the recently appointed Human Resources Manager, are being established to support the quality enhancement agenda.

23   Although an evaluation of staffing and support requirements undertaken for the Academic Registry and Academic Information Services departments, in preparation for self-governing status led to the formation of the umbrella Department of Academic Information Services and to some reorganisation in the Registry, the audit team noted that no mechanism exists for regularly reviewing the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) or the respective contributions to it of academic and support staff. Based on a study of role descriptors and discussion with staff, the team formed the view that, to ensure the effective and secure management of the framework, it would be advisable for the Institute to clarify the leadership and managerial responsibilities of all senior academic and administrative staff.

24   The Institute indicated in its SED that Academic Board, whilst responsible for quality assurance and enhancement, delegates the detailed scrutiny of many issues to a seemingly complex structure of subcommittees, boards of study and examination boards. While detailed discussion with relevant bodies of the University of London and with Institute staff took place prior to establishing the structure, the audit team noted that the SED provided only a limited commentary on the current relationships among the different elements of the structure or where, precisely, different decision-making responsibilities within it lie.

25   In its SED the Institute described its present quality management procedures as 'exhaustive', and stated that its aim is to make them as efficient as they are effective, with a particular view to avoiding duplication. The SED set this aim in the context of what it described as the character and scale of the institution, including, in the absence of any consistent structural division between centre and department, the fact that, de facto, Academic Board operates simultaneously at what would elsewhere be departmental, faculty and institutional level. This lack of vertical differentiation led the audit team to the view that to understand the Institute's QAF it would be necessary to consider in detail the work of the full range of committees, boards and working groups by means of a scrutiny of available minutes and records, and supported by discussion with staff.

26   The Institute indicated in its SED that TLC, chaired by the Deputy Director (Head of Studies), has primary responsibility for the QAF. It produces the Learning and Teaching Strategy, manages periodic programme review, receives proposals for programme and course approval and modification, and reports termly to Academic Board; and it claims that it does so taking account of all aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. On the basis of an analysis of the relationship between TLC and Academic Board, however, the audit team formed the view that there is scope for a more precise definition of the respective roles of the two bodies, both in relation to quality assurance in particular and more generally. On the basis of this evaluation and its review of the overall pattern of interrelationships among different elements of the Institute's committee structure, the team concluded that, whilst the principal aims underlying the framework are sound, it would be advisable for the Institute to redefine the responsibilities and reporting lines of its committees and other deliberative bodies, particularly but not exclusively those involved in quality assurance.

27   The Institute does not produce a single quality manual, but rather a range of seemingly comprehensive teaching staff handbooks and other documents, including the Learning and Teaching Strategy and QAF, containing information related to quality assurance and academic standards. The former, developed in conjunction with the Strategic Plan and within the requirements of Academic Board, takes into account the Widening Participation and Human Resources Strategies; the latter contains operational guidance on, inter alia, the requirements of the University of London, programme and course approval and modifications, annual monitoring, course evaluation and periodic review, the responsibilities of programme and course boards, distance learning, collaborative provision and student placement.

28   All programmes have their own examination boards and external examiners. Examination boards operate on a two-stage basis, with the pre-board meeting charged primarily with resolving matters of principle, interpretation and extenuation and the full board progressing individual results. The Institute operates a system whereby two internally appointed moderators observe all course examinations discussions to ensure parity of procedure and standards; it also has a procedure for double and second-marking against benchmarked performance standards. All assessment related procedures are codified in what appear to be comprehensive sets of regulations, which include guidance on the policies and requirements of the University of London; the Institute's own awarding powers; admissions, entrance and registration; the full range of assessment policies, criteria, methodology and conduct requirements; award eligibility; and the role of external examiners. The Institute's supplementary regulations cover the assessment of research programmes, an activity monitored and managed by the Research Degrees Committee. Programme specifications for each award bearing programme include reference to assessment regulations and incorporate appropriate reference to *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and subject benchmark statements at all levels.

29   While the Institute's assessment regulations engage with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*), published by QAA, the audit team, noting that certain aspects of them are vulnerable to inconsistent application, believes the workings of examination boards would be strengthened by the provision of interpretive guidelines. For example, a recent external examiner's report expressed concern that some failed elements may be resat for full marks, a comment which led the team to the view that clarity and consistency demand that the Institute give thought to introducing a unified penalty system. The team also believes the Institute's current 'case by case' approach to the interpretation of plagiarism regulations, extenuating circumstances and the assessment of candidates with disabilities would benefit from the development of guidelines to structure and confine examination boards' exercise of discretion. The team believes, therefore, that it would be advisable for the Institute to review its assessment policies and procedures to ensure clarity and consistency of application.

30   In reviewing the variety of documentation related to the Institute's quality framework and its deliberative bodies, the audit team noted a number of omissions in procedures for reviewing the *Code of practice*. While it appears that in 2002 detailed consideration of relevant sections of the *Code* appropriately informed the establishment of the institutional framework, mechanisms for monitoring the Institute's developing practice in the context of all sections of the *Code* as periodically revised are not fully in place. The team noted that while Academic Board receives regular papers and reports from its subcommittees, in particular TLC, there is little evidence of the regular mapping of the strategic consideration of the *Code of practice*. It therefore concludes that it would be advisable for the Institute to review its procedures and, specifically, to clarify the locus of responsibility for ensuring consistent engagement with the Academic Infrastructure.

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

31   The Institute did not provide a detailed account of its proposals for enhancing quality and standards in its SED, or give any indication of the existence of a strategic approach to developing or managing enhancement. It claimed, rather, that future plans and intentions are contained in the Strategic Plan and the Learning and Teaching and Widening Participation Strategies; ideas are sought from as wide a constituency as possible; that notice is taken of the comments of external examiners and external academics involved in periodic programme review; and the views of other relevant bodies, including Galleries and Academic Committee, TLC and informal working groups of Academic Board.

32   Academic staff who met the audit team referred to a number of separate enhancement initiatives, in particular attempts to contribute to the overall quality of provision, to support the institutional capacity to undertake enhancement planning and to exploit opportunities as they arise. These initiatives include the appointment of the Institute's first Human Resources Manager and the consequential adoption of a human resources strategy, the development of the initial phases of an image digitisation programme and the formation of an integrated Department of Academic Information Services.

33   The audit team noted a range of methods by which the Institute engages with, and responds positively to, opinions expressed by students. In part these are informal reflections of the participative and collegial ethos which is such a distinctive aspect of the Institute's operations (see also paragraph 65). More formally, however, the team also noted the recent utilisation of teaching study days as a forum within which all academic staff can meet and discuss the outcomes of the annual review of programmes for the benefit of the Institute's overall teaching provision. While later in this report the team draws attention to what it considers limitations in the Institute's

procedures for securing a coherent overview of the quality of student experience as a whole, including in particular their views of the learning and support services, it believes the success of the Institute's informal and formal course evaluation mechanisms in responding to student opinion constitutes a feature of good practice (see also paragraph 68).

34   The audit team appreciates that the Institute's mission has historically stressed the importance of enhancement as expressed in the world-class quality of its research and teaching. Nonetheless, the team concludes that a comprehensively robust and fully inclusive strategy for enhancement has yet to be fully articulated and embedded within the Institute's quality systems and planning cycles, and that the absence of such a strategy is indicative of the scope which exists for the Institute to give greater consideration to the effectiveness of its quality enhancement processes.

Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

35   The Institute stated in its SED that its approval, monitoring and review procedures derive from its size and character, explaining that in order to avoid the possibility of isolation from broader developments in the sector and because of its single subject focus, it incorporates extensive external scrutiny of all aspects of teaching and governance into them. TLC, with the full involvement of its two external members, oversees the procedures on behalf of Academic Board which, in compliance with University of London Ordinances and the QAF, retains ultimate authority for signing them off.

36   As part of University of London procedures for confirming academic standards and quality assurance in each constituent college, the Institute is required to provide the Senate with an annual monitoring report, which includes a summary of issues raised in external examiners' reports, together with the Institute's response; this is prepared by TLC and signed off by Academic Board. Matters relating to collective issues that emerge following Senate consideration of all constituent college reports

are reported back to Academic Board, where a response is agreed.

37   The audit team noted that whilst the QAF itself appears to cover approval, monitoring and review mechanisms satisfactorily, other documents, including some committee papers reporting its development and contents, contain inconsistencies and ambiguities in terminology and role attribution. Whilst a number of shared understandings exist among staff, and substantial informal communication takes place on a variety of quality issues, the absence of a fully developed corporate house style with rules on, for example, nomenclature, authorship attribution, version control, referencing and numbering is potentially detrimental to the understanding of internal and external readers alike. The team therefore believes there is scope for formally codifying the requirements and responsibilities enshrined within the Framework, and that this would best be achieved by charging a senior post holder with overseeing the process.

38   New programme proposals are submitted using standard templates. These appear comprehensive in scope and are supported by helpful guidance documents. Programme approval is normally agreed for a five-year period, with approval confirmed at the time of periodic review. The audit team formed the view that arrangements for the development of new programmes and courses are effective, engage appropriately with all aspects of the Academic Infrastructure, and as such offer TLC and Academic Board a satisfactory oversight of new proposals. These procedures apply also to distance learning and collaborative programme proposals which are lodged with the University of London Senate.

39   Annual monitoring is conducted on the basis of a range of documentation submitted to TLC, in particular student feedback reports, course evaluation reports, summary reports from teachers, external examiners' reports and annual evaluations from departments or programme areas. On the basis of this documentation TLC generates termly and annual overview reports for Academic Board on

each programme area. This phased operation involves reports being made to Academic Board throughout the academic year with, for example, external examiners' reports scrutinised in the autumn term and course evaluation questionnaires in the summer.

40   The audit team found that, whilst the process as a whole offers the Institute an overview of its activities and assists it in identifying appropriate outcomes and actions, many review reports focus more on operational details than on broader reflection or analysis, and considers that the process would be strengthened were the present templates to be reconsidered, with a view to facilitating comparisons between programme elements and the identification of academic development priorities. In support of this, and in order to distinguish between all its strategic and operational priorities where there is at present some potential for confusion, the team considers it would be advisable for the Institute to establish a more explicit annual planning statement which sets and monitors operational priorities and targets.

41   The Institute describes periodic programme review as an evaluation of the quality framework at the level of individual programmes. Each review involves the timely submission of an SED, critically evaluating the programme against specified criteria alongside a seemingly comprehensive set of approval and programme related documentation. The audit team considers this procedure might with benefit be standardised and consolidated into a single sourced and version-dated document with consistent terminology and structure. The team confirms, on the basis of a scrutiny of documentation associated with the three most recent periodic reviews, that in all cases the Institute's procedures were followed.

42   Following a consultation and preparation phase in the course of which they may call for additional documentation, two external reviewers appointed by TLC conduct a two-day review to a clear brief. The solely external membership of the review panel was presented to the team as a means of obtaining objective external comment. While appreciating this point, the team wonders whether consideration might be given to whether the expertise of internal members of staff could also be deployed within a more inclusive staff development and enhancement planning framework.

43   The audit team particularly believes that the manner in which the Institute reports back to review panel members on the internal response to their report would benefit from clarification. In particular, in its SED the Institute described subsequent discussion with external reviewers as informal, a description confirmed by the fact that the team was informed that sometimes a continuing dialogue between the reviewing panel and institutional staff results in a negotiated understanding of review outcomes and priorities for action. Nonetheless periodic review terms of reference clearly invite reviewers to comment on the programme's response, suggesting that a more formal procedure exists. The team believes the resolution of this ambiguity would increase the consistency and strengthen the rigour of the procedure.

44   The SED indicated, and discussion with staff confirmed, that the Institute recognises and addresses the difficulties of establishing a rigorous annual and periodic review process within a single discipline institution. Overall, the audit team believes the Institute addresses the outcomes of periodic review thoroughly and professionally, but that its quality assurance processes would benefit were further consideration to be given to the respective functions, purposes and benefits of periodic as against annual review, to standardising and consolidating periodic review documentation, resolving ambiguities in respect of responses, review recommendations and reviewing the fitness for purpose of the templates currently in use. In addition, noting that periodic programme reviews also provide the mechanism and procedures for quinquennial programme re-approval, the team considers it important that any specified conditions or requirements for re-approval be formalised, with reporting and recording protocols

associated with all aspects of periodic review applied rigorously and consistently. For all these reasons it would be advisable for the Institute to standardise the structure of periodic review reports and formal response mechanisms.

External participation in internal review processes

45   It has already been stated that, first, University of London procedures require the Institute to submit an annual monitoring report to Senate and respond to any comments received back (paragraph 36), albeit that such comments are normally of a generic variety, applicable to all colleges; second, that, particularly given the importance of such involvement for a small, single discipline focused institution, the Institute considers the involvement of external members central to all aspects of its quality management strategy (paragraph 35); third, that in accordance with this emphasis external advisers are deployed extensively (and, in the case of periodic review, exclusively) in approval, monitoring and review procedures (paragraph 42); and, fourth, that close attention is paid to the advice of external examiners (paragraphs 28 and 39; see also paragraphs 47 to 55 below). It should also be noted, however, that the Institute makes a clear distinction between the use of external advisers in programme approval and review on the one hand and the employment of external examiners on the other, believing that the same individuals should not be used in both capacities for the same programme.

46   The audit team confirms that the Institute follows these procedures scrupulously, that all key academic quality and standards committees contain appropriate external representation, and effective external contributions are made to particular specialist areas, in particular conservation, some of which appoint teams of external tutors. Nonetheless, the involvement of expert alumni, particularly though not exclusively in the context of a pedagogy designed to develop students' employability skills, appears to be at an earlier stage of development: alumni presentations and

employment advice events, for example, take place, but not as part of a coherent employability agenda. It follows that there is scope for enhancement in this area, and the team considers it would be desirable for the Institute to review its approach to external relations to realise their full potential for the Institute and its students.

External examiners and their reports

47   As indicated above, the Institute's annual report to the University contains a summary of issues raised in external examiners' reports and the Institute's responses (paragraph 36), though only limited analysis of the issues was apparent in the documentation seen by the audit team. In addition, periodic programme reviewers are supplied with all external examiners' reports and accompanying documentation subsequent to the previous review.

48   The Institute's assessment regulations require that at least one examiner external to the University of London be appointed annually to each board of examiners responsible for determining any award and, wherever practical and appropriate, at least one intercollegiate examiner. Academic Board appoints external examiners for a maximum four-year term, on the recommendation of period sections. Newly appointed external examiners are invited for individual briefings with the Head of Examinations and the Examinations Officer, and are sent a seemingly comprehensive information pack shortly after the start of each academic year.

49   Internal and external assessment and examination arrangements are described in the annual Handbook for Teaching Staff. The roles and responsibilities of external examiners include commenting on and ratifying all examination papers and moderating and/or ratifying all individual assessment decisions. External examiners are normally sent all examination scripts, assessed essays and dissertations which they are expected to sample in such a way as to enable them to confirm that internal marking and classifications are consistent and of an appropriate standard.

50   External examiners attend pre-board of examiners' meetings (known as mini-boards) and borderline meetings, as well as full board meetings to which they report orally prior to providing the Head of Examinations with a template report covering the appropriateness of examination methods, the quality of assessment and confirmation that suggestions made in the previous year have been appropriately addressed; and a summary report for Teaching Quality Information (TQI) purposes. On the basis of its scrutiny of a range of completed report forms the audit team confirms that external examining arrangements are applied consistently across programmes.

51   The Institute's current external examiner cohort includes both period and programme specialists and examiners qualified to oversee professional standards (particularly in the conservation of wall paintings). The Institute has recently extended moderation procedures for its suite of large History of Art programmes by designating two existing and experienced external examiners overall moderators to ensure Institute-wide parity and consistency at, respectively, undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

52   External examiners' reports, required to be submitted within a week of the Board, are circulated to senior staff, the Head of Examinations and the relevant head of section, and, as indicated previously (paragraphs 36 and 39), feature strongly in the annual monitoring exercise. A summary of issues raised, distinguishing between the programme specific and those of more general import, is submitted to Academic Board in the autumn term, in some cases following consideration by TLC. The audit team confirms that a clear procedure exists for notifying external examiners of the responses to their reports, and that all substantive issues are addressed thoroughly and acted upon as appropriate.

53   The audit team accepts the claim made by the Institute in its SED that its approach to the employment and use of external examiners is extensive and rigorous, and that external examiners' comments have led to significant

procedural improvements. It notes in particular that in autumn 2004 the Institute established a working group, chaired by the Head of Examinations, to undertake a major review of external examining arrangements in the light of the revised *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining* and the project report from the Higher Education Academy. The group's extensive recommendations related to appointment procedures; qualifications for external examiners on professional courses; induction and briefing; external examiners' role and powers; a number of contractual matters; the resolution of disagreements; the duties of the overall external examiners for the BA and MA; feedback procedures following receipt of external examiners' reports; revisions to the report form and arrangements for summarising reports for TQI purposes. The recommendations were discussed in detail by a subcommittee of Academic Board and ratified in November 2004, following which assessment regulations were appropriately amended. The team considers that the effectiveness of this approach to addressing the revised *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining* is such that it might usefully be adopted as a standing procedure for institutional engagement with all aspects of the *Code*, both as it is now and as it develops in the future.

54   Research degrees are awarded by the University of London. The Institute's Research Degrees Committee recommends examiners for PhD/MPhil candidates to the University Specialist Group, and monitors and considers examiners' reports. PhD examiners provide the Institute with a detailed report, made available to the Director and Academic Registrar, on a student's performance in the viva voce examination, which includes a clear recommendation as to the outcome.

55   On the basis of discussions with staff and consideration of documentation, the audit team confirms the Institute's account of external examining arrangements as presented in its SED. The team believes these procedures are applied consistently and effectively, that they support the maintenance of the academic

standards of the Institute's awards and that they benefit considerably from being kept under review.

External reference points

56   The Institute's teaching quality assessment for its History of Art, Architecture, and Design provision in 1997 led to a grading of 23. The sole recommendation was to articulate assessment criteria more clearly and provide more regular written feedback on assessed work. The Institute responded appropriately to the recommendation, and now uses structured feedback forms linked to assessment criteria.

57   The Institute stated in its SED that its QAF is informed by the stated expectations of QAA, HEFCE, the University of London and other stakeholders, and that it has set out to embed the guidance offered by the *Code of practice*, FHEQ and the subject benchmark statement at the heart of its procedures. On the basis of an exploration of the Institute's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure by discussion with staff and reviewing documentation, the audit team confirms that FHEQ, the relevant subject benchmark statement and of the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme approval, monitoring and review,* published by QAA, appropriately inform the QAF. In addition, the Handbook for Teaching Staff contains information on the subject benchmark statement and explains that each taught programme of study is explained in the programme specification (available on-line) and the relevant prospectus and programme handbooks. The institutional format for programme specifications includes sections on programme outcomes, key skills, teaching, learning and assessment strategies, programme structure and features. The team considers the Institute's programme specifications well designed, regularly reviewed and used very effectively.

58   The audit team also learned that, as part of the procedure to become a college of the University of London in 2002, the Institute undertook a review of its engagement with the *Code of practice* which led it to conclude that it had either established good practice or had

responded appropriately to the guidance given. For several sections of the *Code* this engagement was demonstrated through institutional regulations or procedures; in two cases (postgraduate research programmes and external examining), recently revised sections of the *Code* have been addressed by working groups which have, as appropriate, recommended amendments to regulations. In other cases, however, the team noted, and the Institute accepts, that work is still needed fully to address some existing sections of the *Code*, including the revised *Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning).*

59   In respect of other components of the Academic Infrastructure, progress files have yet to be adopted, although the audit team was advised that a project to set up a system of personal development portfolios and work experience programmes for students has recently commenced. The *Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning in Engalnd, Wales and Northern Ireland* had not been considered at the time of the audit.

60   From its study of documentation and discussion with staff and students, the audit team concludes that the Institute has addressed many components of the Academic Infrastructure. Its awards align with the expectations of the FHEQ, they are informed by the relevant subject benchmark statement and engage with the *Code of practice*. The team considers, however, as indicated above (see paragraph 30) that it would be advisable for the Institute to undertake a more systematic mapping exercise, based on a clear locus of responsibility, possibly resting with a senior member of staff charged with ensuring a continued engagement and reporting through the committee structure, so it is better able to maintain a consistent and timely engagement with the Academic Infrastructure.

Student representation at operational and institutional levels

61   The Institute stated in its SED that self-governing status has brought about a

significant change in culture in respect of student representation and the Institute's approach to its relationship to the student body. Successive directors have promoted student advocacy, and the Institute now supports a full-time sabbatical Students' Union President who sits, or is represented, on the Governing Board and four of the eight academic committees.

62   Since the academic year 2004-05 the Sabbatical Officer has been centrally involved in organising the meetings of the longstanding Student/Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC). This Committee meets termly, and offers students the opportunity to raise a wide range of issues, with any ensuing recommendations being taken directly to Academic Board. The minutes and papers of this Committee suggest that it operates in a constructive and open style, an impression consistent with the audit team's experience of its meeting with students who spoke positively about the Institute's appropriate and positive responses to their concerns. The Institute, while acknowledging in its SED that not all issues relating to the workings of the SSLC during this transitional phase have been resolved, stressed that it has learned from the experience and will continue to review the Committee's progress in the current academic year.

63   In the audit team's meeting with students the view was expressed that the Institute should reconsider its approach to its general organisation of student representation, including the means by which it seeks and uses student opinions about its academic and general student support strategy. In seeking to evaluate this comment the team was not aided by the facts that the large undergraduate and postgraduate History of Art programmes have no programme committees and that the conservation programmes' boards of studies lack student representation.

64   The audit team noted that the Students' Union currently operates on the basis of a draft Constitution. Work on formally establishing and approving a Constitution, agreeing a job description for the Sabbatical Officer,

establishing a Students' Union Executive Committee and a clear method of finance and professional accountability, is in hand but in urgent need of completion. The team concurs with the view expressed by students that drawing these matters to an early conclusion would, both strategically and operationally, be in the very best interests of the Institute, the Union and the student body as a whole, helping as it would to ensure clarity issues of both accountability and representation.

65   The audit team was told that students believe their views are taken into account to differing degrees within the Institute, and that occasionally erratic communication leads to inconsistency in their learning experience. The students also noted, however, that they value the informal nature of much of the communication within the Institute, made possible, as they appreciate, by its small size and achieved by the individual commitment of many of its academic staff. At a more formal level, while student representation exists throughout the Institute's committee structure, the team welcomes the fact that the Institute has committed itself to reviewing the structure itself, giving consideration in particular to the introduction or reinstatement of programme committees throughout. In the team's view such a move will enable the representative system to contribute increasingly effectively and consistently to promoting the quality of the student experience in all areas of the Institute's teaching portfolio.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

66   The Institute stated in its SED that students formally evaluate all courses by a questionnaire covering both content and delivery; at programme level all finalists are invited to make general comments on their experience prior to graduation. The course evaluation system is the Institute's principal means of gathering feedback from students; beyond this, the audit team notes, the means of doing so vary in method and comprehensiveness, the Institute itself

acknowledging in its SED that the collection of student feedback could be improved. So while all final-year undergraduates are invited to individual meetings with the Director and other members of academic staff, postgraduate History of Art students are invited to group meetings with her; while feedback in the conservation departments primarily operates at programme level.

67   The Institute claims that Academic Board subjects data captured through course evaluation questionnaires to careful and thorough analysis. In the first instance a group of designated teachers are required to prepare summary accounts for heads of period sections and a further summary report for the main feedback meeting attended by all teaching staff (the teaching study day - see paragraph 33), where they are required to provide explanations for particular issues for concern. The audit team saw evidence that actions proposed in response to student evaluation require Academic Board approval, and believes the new teaching study day approach in particular has the potential to improve the quality of the use of student feedback.

68   As indicated earlier (paragraph 33), the Institute's formal and informal evaluation mechanisms at course level are considered a feature of good practice. The audit team notes, however, that the Institute does not augment this course-specific evaluation by regularly collecting further feedback that would offer a coherent overview of the quality of the student experience as a whole, including the extent to which students feel they have been prepared for further study or employment; that its procedures for collecting exit feedback and personal tutor arrangements operate variably (see paragraphs 66 above and 88 and 89 below); that it does not require its central services to undertake routine satisfaction surveys and address their results; and that it does not routinely collect feedback from graduates, employers or other professionals. The team believes, therefore, that the Institute's methods of capturing student opinions on the totality of their experiences would be

strengthened were it to adopt a more systematic and integrated strategy. It also believes further enhancement could be secured were such a strategy to be extended to graduates and employers, since a formalised appreciation of the retrospective opinions of the former and the views of the latter as to whether the Institute has developed students' employability skills has the potential to contribute significantly to strategic planning and quality enhancement. The team, therefore, considers it desirable for the Institute to establish consistent policies and procedures for gathering and evaluating student, graduate and employer feedback.

Progression and completion statistics

69   In its SED the Institute expressed general satisfaction both with the range and accuracy of the statistics and with the story they tell, citing, for example, the fact that its student progression profile demonstrates a low withdrawal rate and a modal upper second class degree. It stated that the small scale of the Institute means staff have detailed knowledge of emerging trends or issues, that statistics serve primarily to ensure that nothing is overlooked, and that small student numbers mean both that some datasets need to be treated with caution and that staff are aware of the particular circumstances surrounding any statistical distortions. Consistent with the supporting role it assigns to statistics, the Institute made no claim in its SED that data analysis itself influences strategic planning.

70   Formal responsibility for monitoring statistics lies with Academic Board, supported by TLC, though the audit team was also informed that statistics are discussed in the Admissions and Widening Participation Committee (AWPC) and by examination boards, in the majority of which, however, student numbers are too small to be useful. The team's scrutiny of the minutes of, and papers received by, these bodies over a three-year period revealed that while exception reporting is occasionally used to identify problems, and while Academic Board

periodically receives application, admission and student data, this appears primarily to be for the purpose of information giving, and the limited analysis which takes place makes little contribution to policy development. In particular, the team was unable to find evidence that Academic Board formally and regularly receives a statistical report or analysis. The team also noted that at its November 2005 meeting, held shortly after the briefing visit for this audit, TLC received and noted the previous year's statistics and was provided with those of the two previous years. While there is evidence from AWPC minutes of the periodic consideration of recruitment statistics, no record of detailed discussion or trend analysis could be found in the papers of this or any other committee, and the team was given no reason to believe consideration of assessment and progression data for planning or enhancement purposes occurs within the Institute's deliberative structure.

71   The audit team concludes that there is little evidence of the systematic consideration of data constituting part of the Institute's quality assurance and enhancement processes, of trend analysis, of external benchmarking or of any feed into annual monitoring from admission and progression data. While the Institute claims that its size, the nature of its operation and the fact that all staff are members of Academic Board mean that all relevant information is considered and that trend analysis in particular is statistically problematic, the team discerns a lack of clarity as to the respective roles of different elements of the deliberative structure, considering the lack of systematic consideration of data a weakness. It believes, therefore, that it would be desirable for the Institute to develop more formal procedures for using and evaluating management information.

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

72   The Institute outlined its appointment, appraisal and reward procedures in its SED, but was silent on their contribution to assuring and enhancing quality. Responsibility for academic appointments rests with the Director in consultation with Academic Board, to which proposals for new teaching posts are made in the first instance. Following discussion and possible referral to a working party Academic Board makes a decision, which, if positive, the Director takes to the Board of Governors for confirmation. Detailed job descriptions emphasising teaching expertise are drawn up for available posts, which are then advertised. The Director chairs all academic appointment panels, which normally comprise four internal staff and at least one external member. Short listed candidates give open lectures on which the panel invites feedback from staff and students present.

73   The Institute explained in its SED that, after initial internal consideration, all academic promotion applications are forwarded to Academic Promotions Committee, a standing committee of the Governing Board. Applicants are required to give a brief summary of teaching activity, highlighting areas relevant to the promotion criteria, including the number of research students supervised and evidence of innovations in teaching. The judgement of the teaching contribution is based on evidence of excellence and innovative contributions in teaching in specified areas. Non-promotion incremental awards are determined through the salary review process for non-professorial staff and Remuneration Committee for professorial staff.

74   The Institute has a well-established appraisal system for academic staff, under which the Director and relevant head of section conduct all appraisals in alternate years. The Institute believes, however, that the appointment of its first Human Resources Manager has created an opportunity to review and enhance appraisal, extending it to all staff and distributing appraiser activity more widely. The revised scheme, designed to enhance provision in line with commitments made in the Strategic Plan, takes effect in the current academic year.

75   The Director advised the audit team that, in the wake of the Human Resources Manager appointment, the Institute is linking its training and development budget to both institutional strategy and the appraisal outcomes. Staff who met the team confirmed that the process remains mainly individually focused, does not include evidence from student feedback and contributes to the clearer identification of training and wider development opportunities. The team saw copies of the new documentation, which links appraisal to objectives and contains an explicit personal development action plan. The guidelines for those being appraised refer to information from the forms being forwarded to the Human Resources Manager for development and training needs analysis; those for appraisers stress the importance of linking individual performance to the strategic aim of achieving institutional enhancement through staff development.

76   The audit team shares the Institute's view that the new appraisal scheme has the advantages of ensuring commitment to formal action plans and distributing appraisal responsibilities more widely among the academic management team. It encourages the Institute to continue its work in this area and further formalise the relationship between appraisal outcomes and strategic staff development planning and resourcing.

Assurance of the quality of teaching through staff support and development

77   The Institute explained in its SED that the Deputy Director (Head of Studies) has overall responsibility for staff support and development. This post, however, is not substantive, and any given occupant may not be familiar with staff development issues beyond those related to teaching, learning and research. Prior to the appointment of the Human Resources Manager, who now supports the Deputy Director's staff development brief, no specialist staff development expertise existed. Nevertheless, a range of staff development and support activities is now in place, some of it funded by HEFCE's Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund.

78   The Institute requires all new, full-time academic appointees with less than three years' teaching experience to undertake training, which is currently outsourced, and has supported one such staff member in applying to the Higher Education Academy. All new staff are assigned mentors to help them understand the Institute's structures, policies, procedures and practices, a system which the Institute described in its SED as operating informally and as providing the most efficient and effective means of ensuring that new staff understand the Institute's structures. Information for both new and experienced teachers is provided through the Staff Handbook which is available on the intranet.

79   Arrangements for the peer review of teaching involve a formal observation procedure. In addition, increases in the quantity of collaborative teaching at undergraduate level provide further opportunities for such observation; and the fact that many academic staff regularly present their work externally means their activities are further subject to peer review. In this context and more generally the Institute claims, and the audit team accepts, that both the presence of internationally renowned scholars on the teaching staff and the participation of outside scholars in regular public lectures and seminars enhance the quality of the student experience

80   The training and briefing received by teaching assistants before their teaching duties commence include marking practice, information about the structure of courses, marking conventions and criteria, and small group teaching. Teaching assistants receive continuing support from a teaching assistant coordinator and the lecturer whose course they are assisting.

81   Both mentoring and peer review arrangements embrace visiting lecturers, who are also invited to the training event for teaching assistants, where they attend sessions appropriate to their experience.

82   The audit team notes that the Institute does not have a staff development policy statement or published strategy, and that only limited information about the subject is available on the staff intranet. In the past the Institute has undertaken little systematic analysis, planning or evaluation in this field, although it can be anticipated that the recent senior appointment combined with the closer attention currently being given to the subject by both TLC and the DAG will significantly raise its profile. The team notes that the Strategic Plan makes significant commitments, including increased resources, using staff development to contribute to enhancing existing systems, providing a clear profile of training and development priorities for managers and staff, evaluating the impact and effectiveness of development programmes and, most specifically, delivering a management development programme for appropriate senior staff, including members of the DAG, by 30 June 2006.

83   Staff who met the audit team spoke positively of the contribution to staff development of the revised appraisal system and the available training and mentoring, and of the potential of the emerging peer observation process (see also paragraph 112), considering staff development now to be addressing wider professional development issues, not least in the area of information technology. Overall, the team saw evidence of an emerging strategic approach to staff development and support, and encourages the Institute to continue its efforts in the light of its Strategic Plan commitments, particularly through work on the Human Resources Strategy and its practical outcomes.

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

84   The Institute has no programmes delivered through distance-learning methods.

Learning support resources

85   The Institute claimed in its SED that, with its internationally renowned galleries and specialist libraries, electronic bibliographies, full text databases and the access it provides to other specialist libraries in London, its physical learning resources are among the best in the country. The students who met the audit team were strongly appreciative both of the learning resources available to them and the fact that they can raise issues relating to learning resources in the SSLC and elsewhere. Nonetheless, limitations in study and shelving spaces have led to complaints which, in spite of a number of adjustments, investments and short term measures, the Annual Report 2003-04 acknowledges as legitimate. In addition, students who met the team commented adversely on the overall quality of information technology (IT) resources, and on limitations in resources and learning support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

86   Following a period when the provision of learning resources was somewhat fragmented, the Institute began a rationalisation process in 2002 with the formation of the umbrella Department of Academic Information Services. Further rationalisation is planned, primarily to address students' space concerns and to facilitate the extension of the wireless network. In addition, the current Strategic Plan, acknowledging the centrality of the collections and galleries to the Institute's teaching and research profile, has put in place a range of performance indicators and identified a number of key risks and dependencies as a means of facilitating further enhancement

87   In spite of the range of initiatives described in this section and the fact that learning resources are evaluated in periodic review, the audit team was unable to locate a comprehensive procedure for capturing student and staff views on learning resources and the general management of student learning (see paragraph 68), and notes that the Institute commented in its SED that informal consultation between teaching and library staff is often the most efficient and effective way of

doing so. Nevertheless, there is recent evidence, from two book library user surveys, an images project, a student services survey and the decision to implement both a comprehensive IT strategy and image storage solution, of the beginnings of a move towards a more strategic and systematic approach. The team encourages this move, concluding that the formal collection of information will greatly help the Institute monitor how well it is matching learning resources to student, learning and research needs.

Academic guidance, support and supervision

88   The Institute explained in its SED that, as well as discharging certain institution-wide organisational duties, the Academic Registry provides students with a range of practical advice and information. In addition, the audit team was made aware throughout of the Institute's prevailing culture of formal and informal interactivity between students and tutors, a characteristic of the Institute as a whole which is universally understood and valued. The personal and academic tutorial system, although it varies somewhat on a programme-by-programme basis, as in consequence do students' experiences of it, is structured around office hours, and is student-led to the extent that students may either not arrange to meet their tutor or miss scheduled tutorials without follow up. The system is generally competently explained in student handbooks.

89   On the basis of a study of SSLC papers and the SWS and meetings conducted in the course of the visit, the audit team concludes that taught students are generally satisfied with, but by no means uncritical of, the support of personal and academic tutors. The concerns expressed by students about the tutoring system, some of them recurrent, include variability in time allocation, commitment, understanding of the tutor's role and tutoring skills, and limitations in the institutional management of the impact of sabbatical leave. While these concerns have been aired at SSLC meetings and a number of

responses identified, the team was unable to ascertain whether all of these have been followed up. Nor was it able to identify any institutional expectations as to the minimum academic tutorial or supervision entitlement or that all aspects of the system engage fully with the relevant section of the *Code of practice*. It believes, therefore, that the system would be enhanced by the establishment of a tutorial policy requiring greater consistency, a minimum tutorial entitlement for all students and an additional support entitlement for students with specific learning needs.

90   The Institute's training programme for research students claims to teach generic skills common to all members of a research degree programme, though the audit team was not able to evaluate its operation or effectiveness. The research students who met the team regarded their personal and academic support as professional in character, but characterised by informality and flexibility. Arrangements for sabbatical leave, for example, can involve either remote supervision or a change of supervisor; students were unable to cite the formal procedure for changing supervisors.

91   The Institute is currently launching a personal development portfolio (PDP) scheme, to develop which it has recently appointed a part-time PDP officer, and prepared an introductory guide which draws appropriately on QAA guidelines and on good practice from other higher education institutions. Students who met the audit team were unclear about the focus and purpose of PDP, with which they have not yet been involved, but members of the support service team, describing the scheme as embryonic, stated that decisions have been taken to consult students and staff, develop an implementation timetable, secure Academic Board approval of a PDP policy, design the materials and launch a pilot scheme. While welcoming this initiative, the team was unable to ascertain the precise timescale for implementing an institution-wide PDP scheme designed to increase the consistency of students' tutorial experiences and encourage them to reflect regularly on their progress in

areas including skills awareness and career development.

Personal support and guidance

92   The Institute claimed in its SED to have a clear system for the pastoral care of all students, involving personal tutors, the Student Welfare Officer, the Central Institutions Health Service and a Chaplain, which, while currently adequate, is kept under review. The Student Service Centre, the Institute's one-stop shop for academic and welfare enquiries, serves as students' main point of contact with the administration, opens three hours daily and attracts high satisfaction ratings, subject only to a wish for longer opening hours. With the single caveat expressed in the next paragraph, students appear, overall, to be satisfied with the support and guidance available to them.

93   In the areas of health, and some careers and accommodation needs, referrals are made to University of London facilities as required. Students told the audit team that the University of London Careers Service in particular is not always effective in addressing their particular specialist needs, that only rarely do the Institute's programmes integrate employability into the curriculum (see paragraph 46) and that there is, in most programmes, a lack of professional practice opportunities. The team was persuaded by these comments, and considers that it would be desirable for the Institute to enhance its provision in this respect by establishing an Institute-wide approach to careers education and guidance, information and skill development.

94   The Institute supplements its support activities by buying into or otherwise utilising facilities provided elsewhere, including language tuition, research skills, health and medicine, some careers guidance, and health and safety advice. The audit team, which was unable in the course of the audit visit to locate a clear and integrated model of personal support and guidance services for students, considers the Institute might usefully augment its current user surveys of individual services, which are valuable as far as they go, by a comprehensive overview of student services as a whole, including the accessibility of the physical locations of externally provided services, as a contribution to the establishment of a clear enhancement strategy (see paragraph 68).

95   The Institute, which has recently conducted a disability audit, is at an early stage of drawing up disability, equality and diversity policies to meet the requirements of the *Disabilities and Discrimination Act* and the *Code of practice*. The audit team accepts that this is especially challenging in the particular context of Somerset House and the legal protection surrounding it.

Collaborative provision

96   As indicated earlier, the Institute's very limited collaborative provision as defined by QAA comprises first-year language teaching (undertaken and assessed by another college of the University of London) and the provision of one course on one occasion by the Wallace Collection. Though it did not explore these arrangements in depth, the audit team has no reason to doubt the quality of the student experience or the standards required in either of these arrangements.

Section 3: The audit investigations: discipline audit trail

MA History of Art

97   The MA History of Art, with an annual intake of 120, the Institute's largest postgraduate programme, is managed by a programme head, its programme board having been disbanded, somewhat precipitately in the view of the audit team, on the main ground that its activities are duplicated by TLC and Academic Board.

98   The lack of a separate programme board for this programme led the audit team to review programme management arrangements more generally across the Institute, and to conclude that, to maintain consistency across programmes, to ensure direct formal student

representation at programme level and to address the quality requirements of its suite of programmes, it would be advisable for the Institute to ensure consistency across all academic programmes by establishing appropriate management committees with clearly defined functions.

99   The DSED comprised the programme specification and a range of documents related to a periodic review undertaken in November 2004, though with neither the majority of the supporting materials providing an evidence base nor the action plan submitted to Academic Board in June 2005.

100   The audit team considers the programme specification clear, informative, user friendly and easily accessible. The honours level subject benchmark statement informs the master's level curriculum and, while the specification makes no explicit reference to the FHEQ or the *Code of practice*, FHEQ qualification descriptors are implicitly addressed, and the template includes programme aims and outcomes and reference to both key and practical skills. The team also noted that a lengthy internal debate had taken place, involving both staff and students, before the decision was taken to retain the nine-month length of the MA. In spite of the fact that the SWS stated that student opinion was divided on the subject, both students and staff who met the audit team supported the Institute's decision. Overall, and subject to the advisability of the Institute clarifying the locus of responsibility for ensuring consistent engagement with it (see paragraphs 30 and 60), the team believes staff are making appropriate use of the Academic Infrastructure.

101   On arrival students attend a postgraduate induction programme. A full and well-presented prospectus is available on-line, as is the MA Student Handbook which contains information on academic guidance and support, assessment criteria, programme content and course evaluation, and which the audit team considers clear and comprehensive. Programme documentation helpfully informs students about scholarly practice and the research culture, including the Institute's Research

Forum. Course documentation varies in detail, but, in response to a recommendation in the programme review report, now follows a standard template, ensuring that information on learning outcomes and their assessment is provided. Postgraduate students are not allocated a separate personal tutor but encouraged to contact their course tutor who is also responsible for performance monitoring, and is the first port of call for pastoral and academic issues. Students informed the audit team that these arrangements are well understood and generally effective.

102   The programme specification states that small-group teaching is the foundation of the student experience at the Institute. Discussion with students confirmed that special option courses normally comprise between four and eight students, taught by a subject specialist or occasionally a team. Students apply, and are usually interviewed, for a special option, although occasionally their first choice may not be available.

103   Although admissions data were analysed in the DSED, statistical data appear to be deployed in programme management only to a limited degree. While data on student admission, progression and completion are generated, and the Institute claimed in its SED that TLC and Academic Board monitor them, the audit team formed the impression that these bodies in fact merely receive and note them.

104   The programme is subject to annual monitoring and quinquennial periodic review, and programme-level staff demonstrated their understanding of the distinct roles of the two processes. The Institute's terms of reference for periodic review are based on QAA guidance. The internal SED submitted for the 2004 review was predominantly descriptive and sought advice from the reviewers in a number of fundamental areas, notably programme length and assessment strategies. The review was conducted in full accordance with institutional procedures, resulting in a short report with recommendations. This was considered by Academic Board and has been responded to appropriately and in a timely manner.

105 Summative assessment takes the form of two essays, an examination and a dissertation. All work is anonymously blind double-marked and moderated by appropriate colleagues, mini-boards of examiners (paragraph 50) and external examiners. Structured feedback based on published assessment principles is provided on essays and oral presentations, and was regarded very highly by the students who met the audit team. Formative assessment, though always provided, varies across courses. Assessment requirements, marking schemes and penalties for late submitted work are clearly explained to students, though the audit team notes that an external examiner has expressed concern about the lack of penalties in the regulations for reassessment. All staff, including visiting lecturers, are provided with clear guidance on marking.

106 The programme's eight external examiners cover the main period and specialist areas, with one experienced examiner recently appointed to moderate the work of the external examining team as a whole. External examiners' reports seen by the audit team are consistently complimentary about student work and the assessment and moderation process, and confirm the security of the academic standard of the programme. The team confirms that all aspects of the external examining of the MA History of Art conform to the institutional requirements outlined above (paragraph 28).

107 The audit team viewed a small sample of student work, most of it accompanied by internal mark sheets. This sample, together with the reports of external examiners, enables the team to confirm that the content of assessment matches the expectations of the programme specification, the procedure of assessment complies with institutional requirements, and the standard of student achievement in the programme is appropriate to the award and its location within the FHEQ.

108 Course evaluation is appropriately explained to both staff and students. An informal mid-term evaluation exercise allows teaching staff to respond rapidly to any identified issues; a formal evaluation exercise, the results of which are considered in detail by the Institute towards the end of the academic year, takes place near the end of term, supplemented for the first time at the end of the academic year 2004-05 by a teaching study day (paragraphs 33 and 67). In discussions with students the audit team learned that, in most cases, course evaluation operates effectively, and, from documentation as well as discussions, believes (see also paragraphs 33 and 68) that the success of the Institute's informal and formal course evaluation mechanisms in responding to student opinion is a feature of good practice.

109 Student representatives are able, as members of the programme SSLC, to bring issues of concern to the Institute's attention, and the audit team was able to identify issues thus dealt with which resulted in an appropriate response. The team confirms that the Institute's student representation policies operate effectively in the MA History of Art.

110 The audit team was advised that the recently introduced Student Services Centre offers useful support, although MA students believe there is scope for significant improvements in careers advice (including information on research opportunities). The team is of the view that the Institute could make considerably better use of its well-established external links to support its students' employability skills (see also paragraphs 46 and 68), particularly in view of the enhancement possibilities resulting from the recent establishment of the Development Office.

111 The programme specification states that the Institute aims to give students access to the best available research-led teaching and world-class learning resources. Discussion with students confirmed the latter's view of the excellence of both the quality of teaching and the available learning resources, in particular the galleries and collections. Both students and staff confirmed the already expressed view (paragraph 85) that the quality of information technology resources is less satisfactory.

112 Academic staff advised the audit team that the revised system for staff appraisal is working well, and improvements have also been made in managing the equity of the staff teaching workload. The recently introduced peer observation scheme (paragraph 83) is effectively supporting teaching assistants and visiting lecturers, but has yet to be extended to established staff.

113 The audit team formed the view that the MA programme clearly demonstrates the Institute's objectives of providing research-led teaching, and that it offers postgraduate students exceptional learning opportunities. Overall, the team is satisfied that the quality of learning opportunities for students is suitable for the programme of study leading to the master's award.

Section 4: The audit investigations: published information

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

114 In its SED the Institute did not report the full range of information available to students before entry, making no reference to prospectuses, the website or the means by which the quality of published information is assured. Nonetheless, the audit team formed the view that both undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses appear to provide comprehensive information, and that a wide range of helpful information is available on the Institute's website. Open days are available to all applicants, and short-listed candidates are given an introduction to the Institute, tours of the building and individual interviews. The academic year begins with induction, and students are provided with the appropriate handbook, which explains both academic structures and pastoral support services.

115 Students, both verbally and in the SWS, drew the audit team's attention to minor inaccuracies in published materials and some failures in publicising programme and consequential assessment changes, and suggested that providing additional information, including assessment information, for international students would be beneficial. Nonetheless, both verbally and in writing they commented very positively about the Institute's published materials, complimenting in particular the excellence and comprehensiveness of the website, the student handbooks and the welcome pack; and, with the slight caveat expressed above, the bespoke website and induction for overseas students.

116 As the Institute provided no information on this point in its SED, the audit team initially had some difficulty in determining the locus of responsibility for signing-off published information, eventually concluding, however, that it lies with the Deputy Secretary Academic Registrar, with occasional, though not especially systematic, guidance from AWPC. It was clear to the team, however, both from its scrutiny and from its discussions with students, that while it would be helpful for handbooks to report minor changes to courses more rapidly, the Institute's published and other informational materials are of high quality, consistent and broadly accurate. The team would, nevertheless, encourage the Institute, as part of its continuing review of managerial responsibilities, to locate responsibility for monitoring the accuracy of published information more securely in the committee structure and the senior team.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

117 The Institute has published entry, continuation, achievement and destination information for its undergraduate programme and entry, continuation and destination information for its postgraduate programmes on the TQI website. National Student Survey results were not displayed either because of insufficient student numbers or because the response rate was too low. External examiner summary reports in the suite of History of Art programmes have been published for the last

academic year. The Institute has published no internal reviews.

118 The Higher Education and Research Opportunities site contains appropriate information about the Institute, including some background information about courses and resources. Some information is out of date, but the website contains appropriate links to the institutional review report, research assesment exercise outcomes and local information on bursaries and scholarships.

119 From the material seen and evidence heard in meetings, the audit team is of the view that the information which has been published is accurate, and that where information has not been published the reasons relate to the size, nature or culture of the Institute. Accordingly the team confirms that the Institute is alert to the requirements set out in document *HEFCE 03/51, Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance,* and, although it has some way to go, is addressing its responsibilities in this respect.

Findings

Findings

120 An institutional audit of the Courtauld Institute of Art (the Insititute) was undertaken during the period 28 November to 1 December 2005. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the Institute's programmes of study and the discharge of its responsibility as a United Kingdom higher education institution. As part of the audit process, and reflecting protocols agreed with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Standing Conference of Principals and Universities UK, the audit included consideration of examples of institutional processes at work at the level of courses through a discipline audit trial (DAT) together with examples of these processes operating at the level of the institution as a whole. This section of the report summarises the findings of the audit. It concludes by identifying a feature of good practice that emerged during the audit, and making recommendations to the Institute for action to enhance current practice.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

121 The Governing Board, the Institute's supreme governing body, delegates responsibility for all academic matters to Academic Board, a body comprising all academic staff and student and other representatives. Academic Board, therefore, has overall responsibility for all aspects of the assurance of academic quality and standards. Of the subcommittees reporting to Academic Board, those principally associated with quality and standards are the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC), the Board of Examiners, Research Committee and Research Degrees Committee. Other subcommittees supporting the overall quality of provision include Admissions and Widening Participation Committee (AWPC), Academic Information Services Committee and Scholarships Committee.

122 TLC exercises substantial responsibility for managing the Institute's Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for taught provision

(the Research Degrees Committee fulfils this function for research degrees), all of which, with very limited exceptions, is conducted in Somerset House, the Institute currently having no distance learning and almost no collaborative provision as defined by QAA. The relationship between Academic Board and TLC is central to the management of quality assurance, since it is primarily through the work of these committees, the one predominantly (but not exclusively) strategic the other predominantly (but not exclusively) operational, that the Institute oversees the quality of academic provision: the one retains ultimate authority but the other exercises substantial operational discretion.

123 The central committee structure appears generally effective, and the QAF, though its contents are on occasion confusingly alluded to in committee papers as a result of limitations in the Institute's corporate house style, adequately supports quality assurance. It is important to stress, however, that informality and collegiality are central to the Institute's quality assurance processes and culture. These characteristics are valued by staff and students alike, and are sustained by factors which include size, tradition, single discipline orientation and mutual respect among academics with, in most cases, international research reputations. Inevitably such informality is accompanied by certain risks, and, while the conduct of the Institute is generally highly professional, it is nonetheless concluded that it would be advisable for the Institute to clarify further the leadership and management responsibilities of all senior academic and administrative staff in order to more readily determine their precise contributions to quality assurance.

124 It is also considered advisable for greater clarity to be achieved as to the relationships among institutional committees and deliberative bodies, including but not restricted to that between Academic Board and TLC. This could be achieved in good part by codifying their specific and respective areas of operational and strategic responsibility, and further clarifying the details of their reporting lines.

125 TLC oversees annual programme and course (module) monitoring and periodic (quinquennial) review, providing evaluative reports for Academic Board, a procedure which ensures appropriate follow-up action. The audit found that the Institute's quality assurance processes would benefit if further consideration were given to the respective functions, purposes and benefits of periodic as against annual review, standardising and consolidating periodic review documentation, resolving ambiguities in respect of responses to review recommendations and reviewing the fitness for purpose of the templates currently in use. In addition, noting that periodic programme reviews also provide the mechanism and procedures for quinquennial programme re-approval, the audit found it important for any specified conditions or requirements for re-approval to be formalised, with reporting and recording protocols associated with all aspects of periodic review applied rigorously and consistently. For all these reasons it would be advisable for the Institute to standardise the structure of periodic review reports and formal response mechanisms.

126 Periodic review is distinctive in that it is undertaken entirely by an externally appointed review panel - an approach which, although interesting, can lead to variability in reports and missed staff development opportunities. It is considered, therefore, that the expertise of external members could be more readily used within a more inclusive staff development and enhancement planning framework, and that it would, in this context and more generally, be advisable for the Institute to establish a more explicit annual planning statement, setting and monitoring operational priorities and targets. Notwithstanding this, in general the procedures are considered to operate effectively, although benefits would accrue from reports making greater use of performance indicator and other data. In particular, it is noted that the Institute makes only limited use of admissions, progression and completion data for quality management and enhancement purposes.

127 Arrangements for student representation on committees appear to be generally satisfactory. The Institute's recent decision to fund a sabbatical post of Students' Union President with significant representative and liaison roles has brought benefits to both Institute and student body, not least a greater student voice in the Student/Staff Liaison Committee, which continues to report direct to Academic Board. It has also, however, presented challenges. For the incumbent these include the lack, thus far, of a job description, reporting line or support structure; for the Union the lack of an Executive Committee or a finally agreed Constitution.

128 Current arrangements for capturing, engaging with and responding to student feedback on learning include the introduction of teaching study days as a forum within which all academic staff can meet and discuss the outcomes of annual programme monitoring. These days continue to be developed and, although some aspects of them have yet to be fully embedded, they are imaginative in design, have been welcomed by staff and students alike in a spirit of open engagement, and have brought demonstrable benefits to both. Accordingly, the success of the Institute's informal and formal course evaluation mechanisms in responding to student opinion is considered a feature of good practice.

129 From the evidence available, it is considered that broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the Institute's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards

130 As a self-governing college of the University of London, the Institute is subject to the latter's Statutes and Ordinances, under which it is authorised to award the University's taught degrees and supervise students registered for its research degrees.

131 While the Institute's assessment regulations engage with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*), published by QAA, to ensure their consistent application it was considered that the Institute could usefully give consideration to providing fuller guidance on their interpretation. In particular, a single penalty system applying to all forms of reassessment would ensure clarity and consistency, while the current 'case by case' approach to implementing the plagiarism regulations, considering extenuating circumstances, and addressing the assessment needs of candidates with disabilities would benefit from codification. Accordingly, it would be advisable for the Institute to review its assessment policies and procedures to ensure clarity and consistency of application.

132 In undertaking these activities the Institute is committed to making extensive use of external advice and scrutiny, taking a rigorous approach to the employment and use of external examiners. Its current external examiners, all of them suitably qualified academically and, where appropriate, professionally, are charged with commenting on and ratifying all examination papers, and moderating and/or ratifying all decisions on individual candidates. In addition, among their number are experienced examiners responsible for moderating the work of their colleagues to ensure inter-examiner consistency and the maintenance of academic standards on the Institute's larger programmes.

133 External examiners attend all relevant examining meetings, report orally and submit a written report to the Head of Examinations on a template which invites comment on the appropriateness of examination methods and the quality of assessment, as well as confirmation that the previous year's suggestions have been addressed, that the standards set for the Institute's awards are appropriate for qualifications at that level, and that the standards of student performance are comparable with those elsewhere. It is considered that the Institute's self-evaluation document (SED) offers an accurate account of the Institute's external examining procedures, and that these procedures are applied consistently and effectively, and support the maintenance of the academic standards of the Institute's awards.

134 In its SED the Institute expressed confidence in the range and accuracy of the statistics it collects, but made no claim in respect of analysis. While exception reporting was occasionally used to identify problems and the Institute claimed, understandably, that its size, the nature of its operation and the fact that all staff are members of Academic Board mean all relevant information is considered, the audit team found a lack of clarity as to the respective roles of the committees and boards involved in this area of work. In addition, little or no evidence was found of data analysis systematically contributing to quality assurance and enhancement, of trend analysis, external benchmarking or of data contributing to annual monitoring. This lack of systematic consideration of data for annual monitoring, quality assurance, quality enhancement and strategic planning is considered a potential weakness, and it would be desirable for the Institute to develop more formal procedures for the use and evaluation of management information.

135 The findings of the audit confirm that broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the Institute's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards, offered on behalf of the University of London which formally awards the Institute's degrees.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for supporting learning

136 In the course of the audit it was found that students consider the outstanding quality of the Institute's collections, gallery and library resources fundamental to their learning experiences, albeit that they have reservations about the availability of book and reader spaces. Both students and staff are aware that the quality of information technology resources is currently less satisfactory, but accept that it

will benefit from a more strategic approach to development and investment. As the Institute takes forward the work it has already identified in this area it will doubtless find it helpful to ensure that it provides staff and students with optimal training in its use.

137 As indicated earlier, the Institute's course evaluation mechanisms are considered a feature of good practice. Its mechanisms for capturing student opinions more generally, however, could be further strengthened by the development of an integrated strategy designed also to seek their views on the range of other services available to them, and to extending the strategy to also include graduates and employers. It is, therefore, considered desirable for the Institute to establish consistent policies and procedures for gathering and evaluating student, graduate and employer feedback.

138 Taught students are assigned a personal tutor responsible for providing academic guidance and personal support. While students generally appreciate the system, the audit team found evidence of variability of practice among individual tutors and inconsistencies among programmes, and it is concluded that the system would be enhanced by establishing a tutorial policy requiring greater consistency as well as by an additional entitlement for students with specific learning needs. Arrangements for the support of research students operate relatively informally, primarily through the supervisory system, but with variable, although generally appropriate, back-up arrangements in place. Research students also have access to a training programme teaching generic skills common to all members of a research degree programme.

139 The Institute supplements its support services with outsourced services and those federally available in the areas of careers, accommodation, health and language support. The audit team found that a number of students identified careers support, the integration of employment skills into the curriculum and professional practice opportunities as areas of relative weakness.

In the light of this it is considered desirable for the Institute to adopt a more evaluative approach to these arrangements, establishing in particular an Institute-wide approach to careers education, information, skills development and guidance.

Outcome of the discipline audit trail

MA History of Art

140 The MA History of Art is the Institute's largest postgraduate programme, and adequate documentation was provided for a judgement to be made as to the standard of the award and the quality of student learning opportunities. The programme specification was considered clear, informative and accessible; the honours level subject benchmark statement has been used to inform the master's level curriculum; academic staff were found to understand and engage with all relevant aspects of the Academic Infrastructure, and appreciate the distinct roles of annual monitoring and periodic review. In the DAT as elsewhere there was found to be scope for increased uniformity in periodic review reports and responses to external examiners' reports, and for considerably greater use to be made of statistical data in programme management.

141 The absence of a separate programme board led the audit team to review programme management arrangements more generally across the Institute, and conclude that to maintain consistency across programmes, ensure direct formal student representation at programme level and address the quality requirements of the its suite of programmes, it would be advisable for the Institute to establish appropriate management committees with clearly defined functions for all academic programmes.

142 External examiners' reports are consistently complimentary and confirm the security of assessment procedures and the appropriateness of the academic standard of the award. Procedures for considering and responding to external examiners' comments appear clear and effective. Structured feedback is provided on essays and oral presentations, and is confirmed by students to be generally

excellent. Student work sampled for the purpose of the DAT, together with the reports of external examiners, led to the conclusion that assessment complies with all aspects of institutional procedures and expectations. It is accordingly confirmed that the standard of student achievement in the programme is appropriate to the award and its location within *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

143 Students understand the arrangements for monitoring and support, and consider them generally effective, with the caveat that they believe there is scope for significant improvements in careers support, including the integration of employability into the curriculum and greater opportunities for professional practice. In the light of this it is considered desirable for the Institute to establish an institution-wide approach to careers education, information, skills development and guidance.

144 The audit also found that the involvement of expert alumni, particularly though not exclusively in the context of a pedagogy designed to develop students' employability skills, is at a rather early stage of development, and it is considered desirable for the Institute to review its approach to external relations to realise their full potential for itself and its students.

145 Students consider that in most cases course evaluation is effective and contributes to programme quality. As noted earlier, this is considered a feature of good practice. The audit found the quality of both teaching and non-electronic learning resources, in particular the galleries and collections, to be excellent. The programme was found to exemplify the Institute's objectives of making available research-led teaching and offering postgraduate students exceptional learning opportunities. It is confirmed that the quality of learning opportunities available to students is suitable for the programme of study leading to the master's award.

The institution's use of the Academic Infrastructure

146 The Institute claimed in its SED that its QAF is informed by all relevant aspects of the Academic Infrastructure, which it has set out to embed at the heart of its procedures, and by the expectations and requirements of the University of London and other stakeholders.

147 The audit team found that the Institute's awards align with the expectations of the FHEQ and are informed by the relevant subject benchmark statement. The Institute engages actively, through institutional regulations or procedures, with the majority of those sections of the *Code of practice* which have been recently revised, although the engagement is not wholly systematic and some work is still needed if all sections are to be fully addressed. In particular, the team found little evidence of the regular mapping of the strategic consideration of the *Code of practice*, and concludes that it would be advisable for the Institute to review its procedures and, specifically, to clarify the locus of responsibility for ensuring consistent engagement with the Academic Infrastructure.

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

148 In spite of being described by the Institute as its first opportunity since acquiring self-governing status to present a considered and reflective self-assessment of its provision, structures, procedures, systems and future plans, the SED was considered predominantly descriptive, offering only limited analysis and critical reflection, and based on rather limited evidence or examples. The lack of clear referencing to other documents, in particular the QAF, the Learning and Teaching Strategy, staff and student handbooks and the new Strategic Plan, made it difficult for the audit team to capture the totality of the Institute from amongst the range of documentation

available, to evaluate the quality of discussion contained in the SED or to understand the systems it was endeavouring to describe or evaluate. Finally, despite the fact that the Institute presented itself as a small and close-knit academic community, the SED gave no indication of student involvement in its preparation.

149 The discussion of governance and management arrangements contained was rather brief and unclear, and rather little information was provided about such key areas as the Institute's intentions for the enhancement of teaching and learning. Nevertheless, the SED did offer an interesting account of the Institute's current and recent circumstances and context. It emphasised the significance for the Institute of its extended period of transition and offered a clear explanation of the Institute's approach to externality, citing evidence of its openness to external scrutiny. Overall, however, as an illustration of the Institute's capacity to reflect upon its own strengths and limitations, and to act on them to enhance quality and standards, however, the SED's utility was considered limited.

The reliability of information

150 The Institute has published an appropriate range of information on the Teaching Quality Information website. Although some institutional information is out of date, the website contains appropriate links to the institutional review report, research assesment excercise outcomes and local information on bursaries and scholarships.

151 Overall, the audit team found the published information is accurate, and that where information has not been published there appear to be sound reasons why this is so. It is accordingly confirmed that the Institute is alert to the requirements set out in document *HEFCE 03/51, Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance* and, although it has some way to go, is addressing its responsibilities in this respect.

Features of good practice

152 Of the features of good practice noted in the course of the audit, the following was particularly identified:

i   the success of the informal and formal course evaluation mechanisms in responding to student opinion (paragraphs 33, 68, 108).

Recommendations for action

153 The Institute may wish to consider the advisability of:

i   clarifying the leadership and managerial responsibilities of all senior academic and administrative staff (paragraph 23)

ii   redefining the responsibilities and reporting lines of its committees (paragraph 26)

iii   reviewing assessment policies and procedures to ensure clarity and consistency of application (paragraph 29)

iv   clarifying the locus of responsibility for ensuring consistent engagement with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 30, 60)

v   providing an annual planning statement to set and monitor strategic and operational priorities and targets (paragraph 40)

vi   standardising the structure of periodic review reports and formal response mechanisms (paragraph 44)

vii   ensuring consistency across all academic programmes by establishing appropriate management committees with clearly defined functions (paragraph 98).

154 The Institute may wish to consider the desirability of:

i   reviewing its approach to external relations to realise their full potential for the Institute and its students (paragraph 46)

ii   establishing consistent policies and procedures for gathering and evaluating student, graduate and employer feedback (paragraph 68)

iii   developing more formal procedures for using and evaluating management information (paragraph 71)

iv   establishing an Institute-wide approach to careers education, information and guidance (paragraph 93).

Appendix

The Courtauld Institute of Art's response to the audit report

The Courtauld Institute of Art welcomes the outcome of the institutional audit and the audit team's judgement of broad confidence in the soundness of the Institute's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and in the academic standards of its awards. The Institute is also pleased that the Discipline Audit Trail, which focused on the MA in the History of Art, fully supported this overall claim. It was very encouraging to note that the Agency identified the Institute's mechanisms for the collection and response to student feedback as a feature of good practice.

The Institute acknowledges the recommendations for action raised as a result of the audit and finds them helpful. A number of the recommendations contained in the Audit Report refer to issues which were highlighted in the Self Evaluation Document as matters that the Institute was addressing. A detailed action plan has been agreed to respond to these recommendations.