

**Experts' Report on the Visit to Franklin College,
Lugano, Switzerland, February 2004.**

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Sent to OAQ by Professor Ossi V. Lindqvist, leader of the visiting expert team.

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1. Introduction to Franklin College, Lugano

Franklin College is an American four-year liberal arts college in Lugano, Switzerland, which was founded in 1969, as a non-profit, independent post-secondary institution. The structure of its organization resembles that of most small colleges in the U.S. The College describes itself as a U.S. American institution with a U.S. American style education; currently the share of U.S. students among its ca. 315 student body is about half. The objective stated by the College is “to educate academically qualified students who are interested in studying in a European setting and being part of an internationally diverse student body”. The great majority or three-fourths of the student live in the college-owned and controlled dormitories. There are some fifty nationalities represented now in the College’s student body, which is reflected also in the composition of its alumni, though there apparently are but few Swiss students. The main income for the College is the tuition fees from its students but it is also supported by smaller external donations. (The annual tuition fee is of the order of US\$32,000, and thus the total annual cost for a student, including boarding and other expenses is ca. \$45,000.) There are plans by the Board of Trustees to expand the endowment fund at a rapid rate to ameliorate the College’s tuition dependency. The College has full autonomy in the use of its resources, though naturally it is subject to financial revisions annually.

The College is fully accredited in the US by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. The practical implications of this accreditation is that (American) students enrolled at Frankling College are eligible to receive financial aid from the U.S. Federal government. Another implication is that the credits students earn in Franklin College are more likely, but not definitely, to be accepted by other accredited U.S. institutions. (In the U.S., the decision about the transferability of the credits is with the institutions receiving the credit.) The graduates from Franklin College have been accepted into graduate programs also in a number of major U.S. and European universities. The course credit structure in Franklin College seems to correspond to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS); the College awards credit according to the American Council on Education (ACE) guidelines.

As a four-year college, Franklin College offers an Associate of Arts and a Bachelor of Arts degree with majors in Art History, Modern Languages, International Relations, International Management, International Communications, International Economics, International Banking and Finance, Literature, French and Italian, and Visual and Communication Arts, and several combined majors in a variety of fields. In addition, the College has External programs, e.g. in the form of Lecture Series, and Summer Courses. It is further developing the Honors Program that was started a few years ago. An integral part of the Franklin College curriculum is the Academic Travel Program which encourages students “to learn by experience”. The students who have

graduated from various European national systems (e.g. the British “A” levels) may be granted an advanced standing for their year beyond secondary school, and the same applies to those with an International Baccalaureate.

Geographically, Franklin College is in an excellent position close to (northern) Italy and its rich culture and history, and similarly close to the central and southeastern European universities, as well as European art and other cultural life at large. This situation is materialized, among others, in the form of the Academic Travel Program which, however, extends also outside Europe. In Switzerland, however, Franklin College in Lugano is situated somewhat ‘away’ if not isolated from the other major Swiss universities and institutions of higher education, though it is seeking closer collaboration with USI.

Franklin College has currently 19 full-time, permanent teachers in its staff, supported by some 40 in administrative staff, some of whom however are active in North America in fund raising and student recruitment. In addition, the teaching staff also has several temporary teachers and visiting scholars, from Switzerland and outside the country. The College is headed by the President and the Board of Trustees (BOT). Franklin College Inc. (USA) gives financial statements in U.S. dollars. Franklin College Foundation is a Swiss organization that gives financial statements in Swiss francs. The recent currency fluctuations have posed some problems especially if and when the income is in U.S. dollars but expenditures in Swiss francs or in Euros. The College had obtained a status of a tax-exempt corporation in the U.S. in 1971, by the IRS.

The current plans for Franklin College call for an expansion of its student numbers eventually up to 500 with concomitant increases in both teaching and administrative staff as well as in the dormitory space, though an interim and more modest goal is set at 390 (full-time equivalent) students by 2007-08.

2. The Self-Evaluation Report of Franklin College

Franklin College had compiled and provided a very extensive data set and survey as a self-evaluation report of its current structure, activities, strategy, and also near-future plans. One apparent reason for the Swiss accreditation was the College’s will and need to become formally aligned by its Swiss counterparts, and especially by the Università della Svizzera Italiana (USI), in Lugano.

The team got the impression that a great majority if not all of the staff in the College had been closely involved in the process of application and self-evaluation process, since September 2003. The College had established a College-wide Steering Committee and a number of internal (sub)committees or working groups (including student representatives as

members) to prepare for the accreditation process. The chair of the Steering Committee was Dr. A. Zanecchia, Dean of the College. In addition to the the self-evaluation report, the College supplied the external team with other reports, publications and data sheets that helped in the formulation of a more complete picture of the institution; some of this material was also requested by the team members ahead of the site visit. Also, the homepage of Franklin College (www.fc.edu) on the internet was helpful.

The overall structure of the self-evaluation report followed by its main lines the OAQ Quality Standards for Academic Institutions, which was helpful as such in the evaluation process for the group of experts. In addition, the report, under every major heading, ran a short SWOT analysis, including the self-assessed strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for further action. The overall impression the team obtained was that these analyses were generally open, transparent and factual, and they already recognized and made reference to several strenghts and possible problems areas that also the external team had similarly recognized.

By its extent and information content the self-evaluation report was rich in information, detailed, well-structured and developmentally oriented. It was the core document and information resource for the group of experts to make its analysis and recommendations. The team made its two-day site visit, which was also very important and informative because not everything can be 'visible' on paper. The team recognizes that a short site visit cannot give a complete and fully satisfactory picture as such of any institution, but at least it very well complemented through discussions the written material supplied beforehand.

The self-evaluation report had been submitted to OAQ in January, 2004.

3. The On-Site Visit to Franklin College

The group of experts made its site visit at Franklin College on February 19-20, 2004. The College had prepared a program for the visit which included discussions with various groups, visits to assess the infrastructure, e.g. the library, class rooms, dormitories, cafeterias, etc. Overall, the program was tight (as it should be) and covered the main issues that the group of experts was interested in. The group had a chance to analyze and summarize the observations between the discussion sessions and also each evening there was a more formal meeting, also around the dinner table. Dr. Dustin was helpful for the group in clarifying the situation in the Swiss higher education at large and the overall policies and practices of OAQ.

Several representative groups of Franklin College were met each for 1 to 2 -hour discussions, starting with the President and members of the Franklin College Steering Committee. Furthermore, persons responsible for Quality Assurance and two members of the BOT were also met the first morning. There were only two out of the 25 BOT members present, but this was understandable because most BOT members live in the U.S. (For similar visits in the future, the expert group found that it may be more useful to have an opening discussion with the President alone, since he/she is responsible for the management of the entire institution as a Chief Executive Officer, and thus in the best position to give an overall account of it.)

The meeting with the student group was again very informative; the students present represented a mix of various nationalities and cultural backgrounds as well as class standing. These discussions revealed, among others, the policy of the College in practice to support crosscultural dialogue and understanding, and the students were apparently very satisfied with it as it was seen as part of their total educational experience in the College. Also, the individualistic teaching offered by Franklin College was appreciated in contrast to many other universities which have to rely on mass teaching methods. One minor problem that surfaced was that sometimes it is difficult for students to keep contact with their own families simply because of the geographical spread of origin of the student body. As for the gender issue, women and men were in about equal numbers among the students (though women are in a small majority).

The first day of visit also included discussions with a group of faculty (8 members), and the topics covered included the teaching management, current study programs and future plans, infrastructure and other support to the teachers, staff development and promotion criteria, as well as research. Later, these discussions were supplemented with more detailed CV's of some of the faculty with lists of their scientific publications. One general observation here was that the faculty was very busy in teaching and in numerous administrative tasks, which in part may restrict their interest in doing research. The faculty seemed to be male-oriented (only two women in it!), but the College gave also reasons for this related to its location abroad; apparently the institution is cognizant of this very issue itself.

The second day of visit started with a meeting with several members of the Administration, and the discussions covered, among others, the need to strengthen the financial basis of the College by increasing its endowment fund, which currently is very small and does not give support especially in case of fluctuations of the income basis or for further expansion of the institution. There is also a recognized need to offer more competitive salaries to the faculty for the sake of attracting more top-level teachers into the faculty.

The meeting with the Franklin alumni group (10 persons) was very instructive. Franklin College apparently keeps a very close contact with its alumni, also in the form of a magazine (Franklin Gazette) and many other ways. The College seems to keep good track of its graduates, as already listed as to their graduate studies in various universities around the world. The alumni expressed their overall satisfaction with their past studies in Franklin College, and they indicated that the education received there had very well prepared them for further studies and/or the working life. The international aspect in the College and its overall atmosphere were very positively emphasized.

The group of experts were also given a chance to examine student work, projects and papers. Especially those of the Honors' students reports and papers appeared to be of high quality, though we only saw a rather small sample of them. Two of the external team members were able to attend shortly in a classroom a lecture course in International Finance.

The site visit ended with a debriefing session, in the presence of the College President, his staff and many of the faculty as well as numerous students. The peer leader Dr. Lindqvist gave a short summary of the expert group's findings and observations, though the recommendation for possible accreditation will only appear in this final report to the OAQ.

The expert group found the site visit well organized by Franklin College and its entire staff, the discussions were friendly, very open and frank, and the additional information materials asked for were readily supplied. Again, the self-assessment report was very informative and extensive (well over 100 pages) and could be considered even exemplary by its contents and depth. Its structure and contents corresponded well to the OAQ format required for the accreditation process. The expert group noted few if any problems concerning the site visit itself and its overall organization.

4. Assessment of Franklin College by the Quality Standards Formulated by the OAQ

The OAQ has formulated a set of standards for institutions as well as standards for programs, each divided into specific Areas. These standards are designed for (public) institutions of higher education in Switzerland. In this particular case with Franklin College as a private institution, certain criteria need to be assessed against its special background. Also, though Switzerland is a signatory country of the Bologna process, all its requirements may not fully apply with a private institution in Switzerland. The European Bologna process in fact has been very much inspired by the higher education structure in the U.S.

The following is an assessment by the group of experts of Franklin College, using the list of criteria given by OAQ.

Standards for Institutions

Area 1: Strategy, organization and quality management of the institution.

1.01 The academic institution has a mission statement available to the public which states its educational and research objectives and which describes the position of the institution in its academic and social context. The institutions has a strategic plan.

The group of experts found that this requirement is very well fulfilled by Franklin College, not only in the form of official papers but also on the internet and in the information materials used e.g. for fund raising and student recruitment, and even in the everyday work of its faculty and staff. As a private college that fills a rather narrow niche in the educational sector (as least in the Swiss context), its strategic plan assumes special importance simply because it is an integral part of its lifeline. The staff, faculty and also the students seemed also to be aware of the major strategic aspects and of the College's mission.

The groups of experts found the strategic plan of Franklin College very instructive and pertinent in the present situation, and it appeared also 'modern' in the sense that future risk analyses were an integral part of it.

1.02 Decision-making processes, competencies and responsibilities have been determined. The academic staff participates in decision-making processes affecting teaching and research. The students participate in decision-making processes affecting their education and are able to state their opinions.

This standard again seems to be very well fulfilled by Franklin College. Because of the rather small size and small faculty, the faculty members apparently are deeply involved in various committees and working groups. Also the decision-making process is clear-cut, and all significant changes in the programs, policy or procedure are taken before the Faculty Assembly for recommendation. There is a Faculty Manual which defines competencies and responsibilities. The Dean of the College is responsible to the President for all academic and non-curricular programs. (There exists also a draft for Administrative/Staff Manual.)

On the institutional level the students are represented by the (elected) College Student Union in conjunction with Student Services and the Dean of Students. Students may be invited as observers of presenters to each of the College's Standing Committees. We must note that the average age of the students in Franklin College is generally much younger than in European universities at large and it is also much more diverse, which may affect their somewhat uneven mode of participation. The College admits that there is need to further strengthen communication between the student body and the administration. It is also noteworthy that because the College is driven by tuition fees from its students, it has to be and it is very much service-oriented towards its student 'clientele'.

1.03 The institution has the human resources, structures and financial and material means enabling it to realize its stated goals and objectives according to its strategic plans.

The group of experts shared the opinion that the human resources, structures and material means are sufficient to fulfill its goals and objectives in the College's present situation. There is need to expand the existing office space and lecture rooms, but these were not seen as too much restricting the work of the College. The time of budget deficits was left behind already in the early 1990's, and thus the overall financial situation is sound, though the currency fluctuations in the value of the U.S. dollar is affecting it somewhat adversely. The endowment fund is miniscule yet, but there are plans to expand it quickly through aggressive fund raising in the U.S. and elsewhere. The College has stated plans to expand its student body, teaching and administrative staff and physical facilities (incl. dormitories) during this decade, but it is too early to make judgment on how realistic they are; and strictly speaking it is outside the accreditation issue at this time. But at least it indicates that the College is serious about developing itself and the spread of its offerings. The current strategic plan extends to the year 2008.

1.04 The sources of the financial means and all the conditions attached to the financing are stated transparently and do not restrict the autonomy of the institution to take decisions in teaching and research.

The group of experts found that in this respect Franklin College meets the standard. The College has full autonomy in the use of its financial means, but of course subject to annual financial revisions, according to both Swiss and U.S. regulations. The annual budget preparation involves all members of the institution, which also helps in building a trustworthy and transparent system. Overall, the financial resources are not quite adequate and they restrict the institution especially in its research activities, but of course they set also serious

limits to the development of its teaching programs in the future, unless the financial basis is strengthened.

1.05 The institution has a quality assurance system

The expert team noted that the overall quality assurance system is in use: planning for it and its implementation started in the early 1990's. The College is also accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The College recently (in 2000) ran an analysis of Self Study related to this accreditation. (The next review is scheduled for 2005.) In its internal assessment the focus is moving away from teacher-orientation (input) towards more learning-orientation (output), or outcomes assessment. The students participate in regular evaluations of their teachers and courses. Each faculty also gives an annual self-evaluation as a narrative statement. A short visit to a class room gave indications of a very strong interactive and communicative teaching methods which may not be that common at all elsewhere in the European HE system.

The effectiveness of the various functions of the College appears to be under close scrutiny, including development, financial effectiveness and institutional goal setting, among others. The responsibilities seem to be clearly defined. Execution of a quality assurance system apparently is also easier done in a small college where students and staff often know each other by names, and thus e.g. student performance can be more closely observed. The work in quality assurance was seen very important by the staff and faculty, and there was no visible resistance against it, but apparently there is also a continuous need to update the faculty and staff by training in assessment techniques. In the future, it could and should also involve a research-type approach towards the functions and outcomes of the College itself.

1.06 The institution has set up a committee dealing with questions of gender equality, or has arranged access to such committee.

Franklin College indicates that it is an equal-opportunity employer, and the gender issue is assigned to the Personnel Committee covering faculty and staff. Besides this, however, there seems to be an imbalance among the full-time staff because only two of them are women. This is an issue also in the face of the fact that more than half of the students are female. The College has recognized this imbalance, but apparently the hiring of full-time female staff into a foreign country proves difficult despite good effort to this effect. The temporary or part-time faculty of Franklin College has a better gender balance.

Among the student body, the current female/male ratio is about 60:40, which is about the same as in higher education in North America in general and also in many European countries.

The group of experts is of the opinion that fulfilling gender equality among its teaching faculty is not yet quite satisfactory, though also noting the special circumstances of this international institution regarding the implementation of its hiring policy. The College admits the problem and it is in the process of formulating special plans to redress the issue. The College apparently is dealing with the issues of gender equality with proper seriousness.

Area 2: Range of Programs

2.01 The institution offers a range of programs leading to academic or professional degrees with stated goals and objectives. They integrate with the existing range of programs of higher education offered by the universities or complement them in a meaningful way.

The range of programs given by Franklin College is integrated into the educational avenues offered by universities in Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe and in the United States, as well as outside these areas. It is offering Bachelor of Arts in several majors (as listed above), and it offers also numerous 'Combined Majors'. (It has also run a special Honors program during the last three years, with rather satisfactory results.) The goals and objectives for the programs were clearly stated and defined, though there seems to be a bit of a dilemma between liberal arts education and professional education. But this may be partly due to different cultures and practices between American and European higher education systems, and apparently this problem cannot be seen as 'insolvable'.

The Bachelor degree offered by Franklin College apparently is very much in tune with the two-tier degree structure required by the Bologna process, which should give competence into graduate studies in Europe and elsewhere. A number of Franklin College graduates have been accepted for graduate studies in North America and Europe. The credit point system at Franklin appears to be compatible with the new European ECTS system. (The Franklin 'semester hour' approximately equals 2 ECTS credits, and thus two semesters are equivalent to 60 ECTS credits.)

A particular difference with the European higher education system is that Franklin College is offering only the Bachelor's, and does not have any Master's or Ph.D. programs which are usually used to 'identify' an institution as a university. In this sense it appears closer to the European

non-university sector, at least in some countries. (The College indicated that it is looking for plans to initiate at least one Masters program, possibly in cooperation with another Swiss university, but it is not an issue for the current accreditation process.)

The group of experts is of the opinion that Franklin College meets this requirement of range of programs and their integration with other institutions of higher education, but only at the level of undergraduate teaching and what solely concerns the Bachelor degree. Here we wish to note the small size of the College, which puts its own limits on the range of possible programs, which may also be limiting the sufficient 'mass' available for each.

2.02 The institution participates in a national and international exchange of students, teaching staff and academic staff.

Franklin College is involved in international exchange but in a different way to the European practices (where the European Union, for instance, is supporting special programs for student and faculty mobility and exchange.). The College has a very international and diversified student body, and the main language of teaching is English. The Academic Travel Program also contributes to some extent to this effect. There is some exchange of faculty with other international and national (Swiss) institutions for speaking engagements etc. From Europe and North America. A close collaboration seems to be developing, among others, with the USI in Lugano. (USI has recently adopted, according to the Bologna model, a three-year undergraduate program that apparently is consistent with the Bachelor of Arts degree at Franklin.)

However, the group of experts shares the opinion that this is an area where the College has much to improve, especially in relation to the possible research activities of its staff and faculty. The Academic Travel Program is an excellent innovation though it would benefit from a more in-depth, academic orientation. But the group also recognizes the constraints involved in the case of a rather small college whose faculty and staff have a relatively high teaching load or are heavily involved in other official activities in the institution. Anyway, the group of experts obtained the impression that Franklin College is willing to seek new partners and collaborators especially in Switzerland, and for this very purpose a stronger degree of research-orientation would be helpful.

2.03 The Institution has specified the conditions for attaining records of achievement and academic degrees and monitors adherence to these conditions.

Franklin College communicates its system for attaining degrees and records of achievement in annuals editions of Academic Catalog, also supported by the College's website. Apparently there is a process going on of further updating the website so that the students could have still better on-line degree audits.

The group of experts found that this standard is satisfactorily fulfilled in Franklin College.

2.04 The institution makes use of periodically collected information on its graduates.

For a private college like Franklin this is a crucial and necessary task as such, and the expert group found that the College is paying special attention to this issue. There is an Alumni Association, with over 4,000 individuals listed from around the world, and with offices in New York City and Lugano. In addition, Alumni Clubs are being established in several countries, and they are overseen by the Alumni Council. The plans call for further strengthening of the relations between alumni and the College, which also could give support to Franklin in its fund raising campaigns, etc. Developing the electronic communication system could further strengthen the liaison between the alumni and the College.

(The College may consider at least a modest approach to placement services for its graduates, especially in light of its international character and situation in a 'foreign' country.)

This very standard 2.04 is very well met by Franklin College.

Area 3: Research

3.01 The institution's current research activities are in keeping with its strategic plan and meet international standards.

In its strategic planning, Franklin College has defined itself primarily as "a teaching institution in the liberal arts tradition, and for its research activities it is modelled on the American undergraduate colleges". However, even in this context the faculty has to be willing and capable of keeping up-to-date with the developments in each one's field, so that proper integration between teaching and research can take place. The faculty has had attendances in professional conferences, it has been lecturing outside the College, as well performing and exhibiting. Also distinguished faculty visiting from the outside, some of them International Exchange Participants, have been used as 'refreshing courses' for both the students and the College's faculty. Many of the faculty expressed

their explicit willingness to engage more in active research, both time and financing allowing.

Currently, the self-assessment report lists some 14 members of the faculty with a Ph.D. or equivalent, some of them from distinguished universities (U. of Cambridge and Princeton U. being on 'top', in addition to e.g., Indiana U. and Johns Hopkins U., etc.). In Art and Music, higher academic degrees are rare and may not be always required even for teaching purposes. The faculty members' CV's each carry a list of publications, some of which have appeared also in recognised international journals or in book form, but there are also faculty whose engagement in active research is rather minimal. Outside awards or research grants to the faculty seem to be lacking. However, Franklin College gives Faculty Development Awards to individual faculty members, a dozen of them in 2003, for attendance and presentations in international conferences and seminars, as well as for writing manuscripts and other scientific texts, or preparing art work. There are individual faculty whose past or current scientific works reach good international standards, but this fact does not apply to all of them. Scientific and scholarly merits do count partially in both hiring and promotions of the faculty. The College has expressed willingness and aim, e.g., through its endowment policy and increased salaries, to attract more of high-caliber faculty to its staff. The College apparently is fully recognizing its competitive situation (in terms of 'threats') and is striving to strengthen it as much as possible.

The strategic plan of Franklin College (1995-2008) gives but little reference to the research aspect; as a private institution its primary interests naturally lie in sound financial matters, physical facilities and hiring of students and faculty, etc. Also, the liberal arts as such are usually considered not to be a very research-intensive area.

But apparently there is a clear need for the College to establish a plan, as part of its future strategy (including staff development issues), that gives proper weight to the active scholarly and research activities among its teaching staff, and one that also involves active participation of at least the Honors students if not all of them in one way or another. This plan should define the responsibilities and 'rights' of the faculty in terms of research activities, though the College of this kind has to find a proper balance between its teaching role vs. research. Such a new approach also needs sufficient extra funding to support it. The research component can also be strengthened by developments in the supportive infrastructure, e.g., in terms of improved library services, access to virtual libraries, specific study periods in the field, etc.

The Swiss university system itself is generally strongly research oriented, which also shows in its good international standing *re.* its research quality and volume. But there are certain differences in the educational cultures and structures between the two continents, which issue and its possible implications will also be discussed below.

The groups of experts found that research in the College's strategy and as an active component of its teaching is not satisfactory. Because this accreditation process aims towards institutional accreditation, it also involves necessary comparisons with other Swiss institutions of higher education and especially Swiss universities, which all maintain a strong research component and generally integrate it with their teaching. (The guidelines of OAQ read (in original German) as: "Richtlinien für die Akkreditierung im universitären Hochschulbereich in der Schweiz".) Of course, the requirements for successful Master's and Ph.D. courses and programs as such in universities always involve an active research component, directly or indirectly, though also depending on the different academic fields.

3.02 The institution ensures that the current scientific findings are made use of in its teaching.

This very issue has already been discussed above in 3.01. Though the analysis given by the group of experts is rather critical and showing weaknesses in relation to the active research component in teaching, the group of experts still feels that considering the overall nature of Franklin College as a liberal arts and undergraduate college, it still is able to follow sufficient quality standards in its teaching and provision of teaching skills. This issue is being recognized and it seems to get even stronger emphasis especially in the hiring of new staff.

Area 4: Academic staff

4.01 The procedures for selecting, nominating and promoting academic staff are regulated and made public. For teaching staff, these procedures consider both teaching skills and scientific qualifications.

Franklin College has defined criteria for recruiting and promoting teaching staff. There are currently four academic ranks for full-time faculty (Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor). In the deliberations of nominations, the three categories evaluated are teaching effectiveness, college and community service, and research and scholarly/professional activity. The openings are widely and openly advertised, especially among the professional people in the U.S. and Europe; particular attention is now given to drawing upon faculty from Europe. The College is also considering creating a new category of part-time faculty with certain specific responsibilities.

There is definitely a need to hire relatively more permanent and full-time staff in relation to part-timers, in the future. The simple reason for this is that the full-time staff is more cost-effective because of their involvement in the administration of the College, etc., which cannot be required of the part-time staff.

The group of experts feels that this very standard related to academic staff is fulfilled by Franklin College.

4.02 The institution regulates the continuing education of its academic staff with respect to both teaching skills and scientific qualifications.

The response of the group of experts to this issue was Yes – but! This issue has been partially covered above in 3.01 and elsewhere. Franklin College requires e.g. an annual self-evaluation from its staff. It is generally supportive of the continuing education of its staff, though within the financial possibilities. Also, leave of absence is permitted for a defined period to accept an external grant, etc. In special cases, also requests for reduction of teaching load may be considered, though how common procedure this is was not clear to the group. There is also Faculty Development Funding that is available for both full-time and part-time faculty.

Apparently the College would benefit again by putting still stronger emphasis towards the staff development in its strategic and financial planning; this would also be another positive attraction towards successful staff recruitment in the future.

Area 5: Administrative and Technical Staff

5.01 The procedures for selecting and promoting administrative and technical staff are regulated and made public.

The group of experts found no problems that could contradict the fulfillment of this criterium in Franklin College.

5.02 The institution ensures that continuing education is available to administrative and technical staff

Franklin College is in the process of finalizing its Administrative Manual, which also defines the in-service training and continuing education opportunities for the administrative and technical staff.

However, in a small college, the administrative staff is rather 'thin', which does not allow for much flexibility, also considering the existing financial constraints. Yet the College is working in the right direction in this issue.

Area 6: Students

6.01 The conditions and procedures for matriculation and admission to the institution's range of programs have been declared and justified.

Admission to Franklin College, as elsewhere, is both selective and competitive. The credentials required are clearly and openly defined and justified; they are also based e.g., on the official results from the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), or American College Testing program (ACT). Non-native speakers of English are required official scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Personal interviews are strongly urged and encouraged, as indicated by the College's self-assessment report.

As a private institution that is fully dependent on the success of its student recruitment and the students fees, the College appears particularly open in its policies towards matriculation and admission to its programs.

6.02 Equality of men and women is assured.

The current student body has a roughly 60:40 ratio between women and men, which, as already mentioned, corresponds to the average situation in higher education at large in both Europe and North America. Ca. 40 % of the students received some form of financial aid from the College. No particular problems were given in the discussions to the group of experts concerning the equality issue. However, the College also indicated that they would like to see a better balance between students coming from different continents, also for the sake of cultural cross-breeding. Apparently students from Asian countries are currently underrepresented.

6.03 The institution observes the development of study achievements and the duration of study.

As already discussed in the context of quality assurance and elsewhere, the College seems to pay special attention to these issues, and the group of experts found no special gaps or problems in this

respect. In discussions about the possible reasons for drop-outs, there seemed to be a bit insufficient data available, though apparently the female students have a bigger attrition rates than the males. One reason cited for dropping out was the need to change the major not available in Franklin but offered in another college or university.

6.04 The ratio of staff to students must be adequate to ensure that the educational goals and objectives of the institution and of its organizational units can be achieved.

The group of experts found the situation rather satisfactory in this respect. With the current permanent teacher and student numbers, the teacher:student ratio is ca. 1:15, and with part-time teachers included, it is ca. 1:10, which both are an average or even better than the respective ratios in the European and even in North American contexts, and also considering the academic fields offered in Franklin College (which are based on liberal arts education and which are not laboratory-intensive, etc.). The students were very appreciative of the more individualistic and interactive teaching methods in Franklin, which may also reflect the relatively small class sizes, but is mostly based on the existing teaching culture.

Area 7: Infrastructure

7.01 The institution has an infrastructure adequate to fulfill its medium- and long-range objectives.

The group of experts found no special gaps or problems that might seriously affect the fulfillment of the College's objectives. The College is in a planning phase to expand its physical facilities (incl. dormitories) in Lugano. The College's infrastructure may be relatively sufficient now for the short-term, but it has still shortcomings as also listed by the self-assessment report, e.g., concerning study space and library storage. Also considering the College's plans for the future expansion, meeting the long-term needs will be very challenging. This requires a very balanced and step-wise approach in the implementation of the strategy so that the future income and the operating and maintenance costs do not deviate too much from each other, which might jeopardize the future wellbeing of the entire College.

Area 8: Cooperation

8.01 The institution has established successful relationships on a national and international level. It promotes cooperation with other academic institutions, the working environment and relevant stakeholders.

The stated purpose for Franklin College to seek for this institutional accreditation is to establish better and closer relationship with other Swiss universities and HE institutions. The impression was that the College feels a bit isolated, and not only for geographical reasons. The University of Lugano (USI) is still rather small but physically nearby, and it offers potential for mutual development and cooperation with Franklin College in the future. Again, it is apparent that long-term academic networks often work best through research networks (rather than teaching alone) which may be a bit of a problem for a teaching institution such as Franklin. The Summer Programs in Franklin have also been one more avenue for short-term visits of various outside experts and teachers. Though the College is promoting cooperation with other academic institutions, there are still new and unused possibilities available both in Switzerland and internationally, using and relying on the College's core strengths and high degree of internationalization, also in the context of the rapidly developing Bologna process in Europe.

Yet through especially its alumni the College has been able to build liaisons with the working environment – successful alumni may serve as examples and models for the younger students, etc. It was difficult to establish the overall extent of the network of relevant stakeholders, but the group of experts was given several prominent examples.

Standards for Programs

3.02 The range of programs covers the major aspects of the field in question. It allows students to acquire scientific working methods and ensures that scientific findings are integrated. The teaching and evaluation methods used are in line with the stated teaching goals and objectives.

In the U.S. context, liberal arts education generally aims at preparing the students to think critically, and, in case of Franklin College, the international aspects in all its curricula are particularly represented, with special attention also to the development of students' communications skills. In this context it is more appropriate to use the term 'education' than 'training'.

The Economics and Finance curriculum offers the students options such as International Economics, International Banking and Finance, and several possibilities of combining it with several minors (e.g. Economics). The level of the courses starts at level 100 and goes through 200 and 300 levels. There seems to be sufficient amount of interrelated links between the courses for the sake of coherence, as well as necessary auxiliary courses (statistics, computer science, etc.). Student research is required and encouraged especially in the Economics and some other courses, and hopefully this aspect is further strengthened in the future. The Academic Travel program has covered visits, among other places, to U.S. Federal Reserve Banks, The World Bank, the OECD, and other such international and national institutions, as well as even visits to other continents (Africa, etc.).

The Bachelor of Arts with major in International Economics and in International Banking and Finance normally takes 4 years, with 126 credits required, in addition to 126 contact hours including self-study, research work etc. The teaching and evaluation methods seems to be in line with the stated goals and objectives. The goals and objectives of the programs as such are present on the Internet and they are up-dated regularly, and also for tutorial and other purposes the students meet regularly with their assigned teachers.

The academic area of Economics and Finance for the Bachelor Degree at Franklin College fulfills these stated requirements.

Area 4: Teaching Staff

4.01 Courses are taught by educationally competent and academically qualified faculty.

It was apparent that educational competence and teaching experience are important criteria in selecting the teaching staff in Franklin College. The group of experts were given access to several VC's of the teachers, also those of two faculty members that will join Franklin shortly. It was also found that the teaching faculty is generally qualified and experienced in the European and North American context. But again, the balance with the faculty members' teaching and research duties is very uneven; apparently the faculty is capable and even willing to engage in more research.

4.02 The workload assigned to teaching and to research activities is defined.

The Franklin College has a Faculty Manual, as already referred to earlier in this report, that covers the overall organization of the College, faculty by-laws and contractual statements, among others. Under Faculty Obligations, the “Faculty shall teach seven courses per year, modifiable by mutual agreement in accordance with institutional policies”. Also the annual evaluation process for full-time faculty defines the realized work loads. According to the self-assessment report, teaching is defined at 50%, service to the college at 30%, and professional engagement (incl. research) at 20%. The requirement for seven courses a year is a rather heavy teaching load.

There are no clearly stated requirements, even time-wise, for any direct research activities, except that under the title “Research achievement and scholarly/professional activity” of the Faculty Manual there is a list of what such activities might include, e.g., publication of books and occasional papers, articles in refereed journals, conference presentations, inter-institutional research collaborations, research grants, seminars, workshop organizations, professional talks, artistic creation, exhibition of creative work, professional consulting, etc.

The workload indicated in the Faculty Manual and elsewhere is clearly defined only for teaching and other duties towards the College, but as for the research activities it is vague and rather descriptive only, and not sufficient at all. Research is supposed to be conducted outside the assigned hours of physical presence on campus for teaching, advising and service to the institution, as stated in the self-assessment report.

The group of experts would again draw the attention to the heavy teaching load contracted to the full-time faculty, which clearly leaves too few possibilities for research, on campus or outside it. Research requirement is of course much more difficult if not impossible to the part-time or temporary faculty, though they may be well engaged in research in their home institutions.

5. Impression of the overall quality of teaching and studies at Franklin College, with a profile of its strengths and weaknesses

The Franklin College is a liberal arts college for undergraduate education in Switzerland, and rather recently it has been accredited by the U.S. Middle States Commission. Geographically it is situated in Lugano, southern Switzerland, which is an excellent location close to northern Italy and its universities and cultural centers, and also close to central Europe at large; yet it seems to feel a bit isolated in the sense that there are no major Swiss universities or HEI’s nearby, though the

University of Lugano (USI) certainly offers new possibilities for further cooperation in the future.

The above analysis (Chapter 4) already includes several observations by the group of experts on both the strengths and weaknesses of the College, but the following summary analysis may again be helpful.

In a way, Franklin is a 'niche' institution in Europe, and it can best succeed by offering teaching and education in such fields and in such formats where it cannot expect heavy competition. It is a U.S. Institution in Switzerland/Europe, and for the sake of this analysis the differences in the higher education systems between the two continents also have to be taken into account. Certain central features of the ongoing Bologna process in Europe have also been inspired by the U.S. higher education system, and so especially by the two-tier degree structure with the undergraduate Bachelor degree and the graduate studies following it. The Berlin communiqué in 2003 also added the third cycle, or the Ph.D. training, and thus the general study structure may be described as 3+2+4 years.

The apparent strength of Franklin College clearly lies in its international character where young people from several dozen countries from all over the world come together and study together and also learn from each other. The campus arrangement and the required travel programs add to this effect. Both the students and the alumni indicated their great satisfaction with the current teaching and teaching methods and with their experience at the College at large. Overall, teaching was highly interactive and stimulating. The small class size and the rather good student:teacher ratio in general contributes to this effect. The students participate in evaluations of the courses and their teachers. The infrastructure supporting the studies seems to be reasonably satisfactory, also taking into account the relatively good geographic position of the College close to many other European universities and cultural and economic centers. In the European context it is important to note that the average age of students in Franklin College is rather young, which may be an asset itself, especially considering that in Europe at large students tend to enter higher education at an older age and graduate (if they graduate at all, considering the often high drop-out rates) after often a much prolonged study period.

The main source of income for the College is in the students' fees, which also shows in the fact that it is very much student-oriented and also teaching oriented. Thus it is also a 'market-oriented' College, both in student recruitment and in its reach to the job market, especially through its alumni organizations. In this sense it somewhat deviates from European public institutions of higher education. The College is further developing an internal quality assurance system, where learning outcomes and outcomes assessments in general are getting higher priority. The Bachelor Degree offered by Franklin apparently is close to

the new Bachelor that is being developed in the Bologna signatory countries, and which involves a 3-year full-time study, with an accumulated total of 180 ECTS credits.

Franklin College, however, is also facing several serious challenges, some of them of academic nature, some being financial. As has been stated under several headings above, the share of direct research engaged in by the staff and faculty is quite insufficient for the kind of institutional accreditation it is applying for (“universitär”). Yet strengthening the research component is also tied to College’s financial basis. The College has plans to expand its student body up to 500, which through increased income may give it wider scope in its offerings, and also improve the ability to strengthen the research basis of its faculty and the necessary infrastructure, as well as to build the required and the (hopefully) sustainable national and international academic networks. (As a start, the College would benefit, for example, by assigning a special Chair or Chairs whose teaching and research duties are in a better balance, and whose salary base is attractive enough for very competent persons.) The existing endowment fund is minuscule but the College presented plans of fund raising to increase it several times in the next few years. Anyway, good financial planning is very crucial for a College of this type.

Franklin College would greatly benefit by including research activities as integral part of all its activities and of its strategy. In fact, there should be a particular strategy for the expansion, the financial basis, staff development, work load policies, student research, and other such components, related to the short- and long-term development of the research component in the College’s functions. Also, analyses of or even research on, the College’s own functions and structures, and of the environment it is working in could contribute to its long-term success and strategic planning.

Furthermore, the gender issue shows serious imbalance among the full-time faculty, and though there are ‘apparent’ reasons for it, the College should continue making special efforts to hire more woman teachers, especially and because women are in a small majority in the student body anyway.

The Academic Travel Program is and could be a still stronger asset to the College if its practical execution is even more in-depth and more research-based. (Yet travel itself may be an educational experience as such for many young people who previously may not have seen much of the world outside home.) Students coming from Europe may already be in a better position ‘in knowing the world’ than those from Asia or North America. (The students get a certain credit for participating in the Academic Travel program.)

Overall, Franklin College is facing a number of important strategic decisions in the very near future, e.g. related to its future academic

orientation and program offerings, and to the strengthening of its financial basis through student fees, increasing the endowment fund, obtaining donations through fund raising or otherwise. They all affect the College's competitive ability in the global HE market. It is expected that there will be a new 'market' for Bachelor degrees in Europe once the Bologna process is fully completed.

The Bologna process itself is part of Franklin College's current competitive environment, and thus it is recommended strongly that the College seeks to follow the European developments in the Bologna process carefully and even participates in its execution through international networks where feasible. As a single example, the full adoption of the Diploma Supplement would give Franklin's students enhanced opportunities for graduate studies in Europe and also outside Europe.

There are yet certain differences between the European and North-American systems concerning the financing of higher education. In both of them, the public support has not kept pace with the increased demand for HE or it has even stagnated or relatively declined. In the U.S., however, public higher education has been compensated for the 'lost' revenue by increasing the tuition fees from the students. In the U.S., colleges are frequently also recipients of donations from their alumni and other individuals, which is usually not possible or common in Europe, often for taxation reasons alone. Some European countries charge a tuition fee, but there are also policies with the aim compensating its effects by special grants, financial aid, students loans, and other such measures, which however exist also in the U.S. That is, the issue of the tuition fee should and cannot be seen in isolation of the overall educational policy of each institution or of the nation.

The guidelines given to the group of experts by OAQ go under the title "Richtlinien für die Akkreditierung im universitären Hochschulbereich in der Schweiz". The crucial question here is if Franklin College is "universitär", that is, comparable to a Swiss university by the process of this evaluation. (The English translation of the term "universitär" as "academic" leaves something to be explained!)

There are few definitions in Europe concerning what constitutes a 'university'. The European University Association (EUA) defines it through the right to give Ph.D. degrees - and such institutions may number ca. 1000 in Europe. This may not be satisfactory, however, since some of these institutions are self-proclaimed, some for historical reasons, without proper accreditation or recognition for their quality. Norway has made a definition, through an official Decree, of the 'university', but even that definition is constrained by the special conditions in the country. There are few if any established institutions in Europe (apart from some private ones in special fields) that only give

undergraduate education, which is in contrast to the overall situation in North America. In the European Education Ministers' meeting in Berlin in September 2003, the so-called third cycle after the Master's, that is the Ph.D./researcher training, was also added into the process that will finally lead to the completion of the European Higher Education Area (HEA) by 2010. (The signatory countries in the Bologna process currently number 40.)

Generally and at least in the Swiss context, the property of a university lies in its strong research basis and the teaching/learning based on it. In fact, in the European context there seems to exist a requirement for each faculty member or teacher for active and successful research, which is an important component of each one's portfolio and measure of success. Internationally, the Swiss universities are known for their high quality research, in a very competitive, international environment.

Based on these observations, on the available information and on the evaluation and site visit to Franklin College, the group of experts is of the opinion that the College does not correspond to a full university status in Switzerland, also according to the group's interpretation of what the term "universitär" constitutes. This criticism mainly concerns the strengthening of the research component of Franklin College.

However, the degree structure and the overall width and quality of Franklin College's undergraduate education correspond to and meet the requirements for the undergraduate Bachelor Degree at a university level.

The Bologna process itself and the communiqué of the European Ministers of Education given in Berlin in 2003 stress the value of diversity in the European higher education. The new two-tier degree structure and the emphasis on transparent quality assurance systems are the two focal points for the European HE and for the construction of the European Higher Education Area in 2010. The Bergen conference in 2005 will give a follow-up and assessment of the developments towards HEA. The European universities and HEI's are in the process of rebuilding their degree structure to meet these new requirements. (In some countries also the non-university sector or polytechnics are part of the process.) The Franklin College can be also compared to some extent with the non-university sector of higher education, at least in some European countries, though indications of the so-called academic drift exist. For Franklin College, even closer ties and networking with (particularly) the Swiss universities and other institutions of higher education could provide special opportunities for staff and student exchange, development of curricula, provision of research opportunities, etc.

6. Recommendation on accreditation

Based on the above observations and analyses, the group of experts is of the opinion that Franklin College does not correspond to a university status in Switzerland, according to the interpretation of what the term “universitär” apparently constitutes.

In Franklin College, the degree structure and the overall width and quality of its undergraduate education do correspond to and meet the requirements for the undergraduate Bachelor Degree at a university level.