

Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of London School of Academics Ltd, September 2017

1 Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that London School of Academics Ltd (the School) has made commendable progress with implementing the action plan from the September 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) \(HER \(AP\)\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 At the time of the monitoring visit there were 111 students enrolled on the level 5 Diploma in Education and Training awarded by City and Guilds. This compares with 100 students recorded at the time of the September 2016 HER (AP). There was, additionally, one student enrolled on a level 4 City and Guilds Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes. There have been no changes to premises, programmes offered or awarding organisation over the past year. Two additional assessors/mentors were appointed with effect from January 2017. There are five full-time members of staff who combine academic, managerial and administrative responsibilities and six part-time (50 per cent) who are predominately engaged in teaching.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The School has made commendable progress in developing and implementing effectively the two areas of good practice, three recommendations and two affirmations identified in the 2016 HER (AP) report and in the action plan. All actions have been implemented fully and have led to improvements in the School's management of its provision. Good practice identified in the School admissions and learner support systems has been further developed (paragraphs 4,5; see also paragraph 11). The recommendations arising from the 2016 report have been fully implemented. A process for the consideration of the City and Guilds External Quality Assurer's Report has been put in place (paragraph 6), the relationship between the School and its work placement providers has been formalised (paragraph 7), and strategic planning to support long-term enhancement has been strengthened (paragraph 8). The School virtual learning environment (VLE) has undergone further development (paragraph 9) and greater use of data has been made to monitor the student 'journey' effectively (paragraph 10). Actions have been implemented in a timely and considered manner and the School monitors its progress with target dates for completion of actions at regular scheduled meetings.

4 Good practice in the detailed care taken in the admissions process to identify the strengths and needs of individual students is reviewed after the enrolment of September and January cohorts of students. The majority of students are enrolled on the level 5 Diploma in Education and Training, using the recently updated policy for learner admissions. An already robust admissions process has been developed further, with a requirement for applicants to use information communication technology (ICT) in a presentation, enabling early identification of the need for additional ICT support. The suitability of applicants is also assessed using the School Fitness to Practise Procedure.

5 The School provides strong individualised student support to its diverse student body, enabling its students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

The continued implementation of Equality, Diversity and Welfare policies, supported by a wealth of published materials on the VLE, demonstrates a strong commitment to learner support and development, which is valued by the students. Students have an assigned personal tutor responsible for scheduled tutorials, reviewing targets in Individual Learning Plans and providing access to additional learner support. The School reviews and develops its enhancement strategy action plan for learners following the annual programme monitoring and review meeting. All lecturers use a standardised template to track student progress, monitored each term by the Internal Quality Assurance team using sampling and through standardisation meetings. Learner support is enhanced by an updated Resource Policy, and employability skills workshops are incorporated into the programme to support professional development and training.

6 The recommendation to establish and implement a formal process for consideration of the annual report of the City and Guilds External Quality Assurer was established by the Internal Quality Assurance team and completed in January 2017. The Internal Quality Assurance Coordinator is responsible for overseeing this formal process, considering recommendations from the External Quality Assurer, including identified action points and good practice. A summary of the outcomes is provided to the student representative body, the Learner Representative Society, and is accessible to all students on the VLE.

7 A second recommendation, to formalise the relationship between the School and work placement providers in order to ensure a shared understanding of the responsibilities, was completed by January 2017. A Work Placement Notice Agreement was produced by the School Managing Director and approved by the Board of Governance. Providers of work placements are required to sign the agreement, setting out roles and responsibilities of the School, the provider and the learner enrolled on the Diploma in Education and Training.

8 The School has developed an Enhancement Strategy Action Plan in response to the recommendation to strengthen strategic planning in order to support long-term enhancement goals. Enhancement initiatives are reviewed following each annual programme review cycle and focus on academic and professional support for learners, as well as development of employability skills.

9 Development of the VLE to support teaching, learning, assessment, and administration continues following the affirmation from the last review. Currently, the VLE is used for updating all student and staff information, College policies and lecture materials, and for learner unit feedback surveys. Further work is currently being undertaken to develop the use of the VLE for assessment submission and grade recording, following concerns raised by the School team.

10 The additional affirmation of the steps being taken to strengthen consideration of student data from entry to completion continues through the annual programme monitoring and review cycle. School processes now provide improved oversight through more detailed consideration of student admission, progression and completion data, and learner feedback, together with the External Quality Assurer's Centre Activity Report.

11 School processes for the admission of students are rigorous, and continue to be developed, monitored and evaluated. The majority of applicants seek admission to the level 5 Diploma in Education and Training, using information on the School and the City and Guilds websites, or through personal recommendations and local recruitment events. Applicants are required to attend an open day and may proceed to an admissions interview with a trained interviewer, according to the School Admission Policy and Fitness to Practise Procedure. The introduction of a further requirement to give a presentation to the admissions team enables early identification of additional individual learner support needs. All applications are reviewed to ensure that applicants demonstrate a genuine intention to

study in their personal statements. A minority (less than 10 per cent) of students are admitted to level 3 and level 4 City and Guilds short programme awards, using similar admissions processes. Competence in English language and in mathematics is assessed robustly using verification of certification and transcripts, by personal interviews including detailed questioning about prior learning, and a subject-based written assessment. Overall, about one-third of all applicants are rejected.

12 The School operates a system of programme monitoring for each of its two intakes per year to the Diploma programme, using guidance issued by the awarding organisation, with annual reviews by the School team and the Learner Representative Society. The Curriculum Manager is responsible for the additional strategy of including risk assessments with identified action plans to strengthen the use of student data and learner feedback. The School is able to maintain strategic oversight of teaching, student performance, learner concerns and issues relating to non-completion of the programme or individual units, withdrawals and extensions granted. Programme monitoring and annual reviews are used effectively to develop the School Enhancement Strategy and action plan, and are published on the VLE.

13 Students commented that they are engaged by the School as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience, both formally and informally. Students are involved in feedback to staff through the School open-door policy, access to the Student Welfare Officer, assigned personal tutors and mentors, unit and end-of-programme feedback surveys, and through an active Learner Representative Society which meets the teaching team and the Internal Quality Assurance team. Discussion of issues raised and other feedback includes the opportunity to meet and give presentations to the City and Guilds External Quality Assurer. Engagement of individual learners is also managed using the Individual Learning Plan, which is a detailed record of targets and goals achieved midway and at the end of the course. Students on all programmes receive certificates from City and Guilds confirming achievement of units.

14 Retention and achievement rates are commendable. The retention rate has exceeded 94 per cent for all six cohorts recruited since 2014; indeed, of 312 students enrolled over this three-year period only 13 discontinued. Pass rates range from 94 per cent to 100 per cent.

4 Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

15 The School responds effectively to the requirements of City and Guilds Qualification Handbooks and Centre Guidance Documents in the management and delivery of its programmes. There is effective engagement with the Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, against which the School continues to map its policies through its responses to the HER (AP) action plan 2016 and the School Strategic Action Plan, particularly for Expectations B2, B3, B4, B5, B7, B8 and B10.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

16 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

17 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Elizabeth Briggs, Reviewer, and Professor Nicholas Goddard, Coordinator, on 27 September 2017.

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