



## Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Simply Alliance Ltd, t/a Docklands Academy, London, September 2014

### Section 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 Simply Alliance Ltd, trading as Docklands Academy, London (the Academy) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the September 2013 [Review for Educational Oversight](#).

### Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 The Academy has 33 higher education students, which is 13 more than at the review visit in September 2013. The students are enrolled on programmes leading to awards of Pearson and the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality.

3 In August 2014 a new Principal was appointed who had previously worked for the Academy in a senior advisory and consultancy role. Other new appointments include the Head of the Academic Department who manages delivery of all academic programmes, and the Head of Marketing. The Academy has 11 full-time and five part-time staff which is four fewer than in September 2013. The Academy has introduced new administrative systems including a library management system, pre-enrolment administration software, and reputable plagiarism-detection software.

4 From May 2014, the Academy shares its premises with the London branch campus of the University of South Wales. The Academy therefore provides premises and services for a group of staff from the University of South Wales who work in the building.

### Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The Academy has built on the good practice in its 2013 review report in line with the action plan. The virtual learning environment provides greater access to additional learning material and the Academy plans to enhance this further.

6 The Academy has made acceptable progress on all of the recommendations contained in the action plan. It has begun to review its progress and to evaluate the impact of new initiatives through the Academic and Advisory Board.

7 The Academy has established an Assessment Committee which reports to the Academic and Advisory Board, as does the Quality Committee. Clear terms of reference have been developed for each of the committees, but the minutes of meetings show duplication of items discussed. The Assessment Committee does not solely consider student achievement and progression and while external examiners are invited they have yet to attend.

8 The Academy has developed a more systematic approach to the management of information and can track students' progression and achievement. Unfortunately this management information is not reported in annual monitoring nor used to inform strategic planning.

9 The Academy has begun to use the newly acquired plagiarism-detection software to enable staff to check formative and then summative assignments. Students receive training about academic misconduct and staff have been trained to use the plagiarism-detection software.

10 The Academy's Quality Committee considers external examiner reports effectively. In response to recommendations in the Pearson Annual Programme Review, the Academy now uses diverse assessment methods and monitors students' progression. The Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality has yet to make a quality assurance visit.

11 Students provide detailed feedback through representation on the Academic and Advisory Board, the Student Committee and weekly professional development sessions with staff. The members of the Student Committee are unfamiliar with the arrangements for external examining.

12 The Academy has introduced an effective three stage system for the approval and publication of information. The Academy's website displays accurate details of courses offered on behalf of the relevant awarding organisations.

13 The Academy has developed a clear staff recruitment policy which identifies the essential and desirable characteristics required for each post. New members of staff have been appointed using the more explicit person specification which worked well.

14 The Academy has revised the Quality Manual and updated its constituent policies and procedures which now provide an effective reference point. The Quality Manual is easily accessible to staff and students via the virtual learning environment.

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

15 The Academy has made acceptable progress in using the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). The Academy has benchmarked the policies and procedures in its Quality Manual to the Quality Code. It is supported by its awarding organisations whose regulatory frameworks assist alignment of its practices with the Quality Code. The recently signed agreement with the University of South Wales makes provision for further development of the Academy's quality procedures and their alignment with the Quality Code.

16 The Academy's senior staff are conversant with the Quality Code and have introduced it to lecturers and administrators to raise awareness. Lecturers are required to acquaint themselves with *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching* and *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning* of the Quality Code. Tutors are then required to ensure that assessment processes and learning resource provision through the virtual learning environment align with the Quality Code. The Academy has started to develop student engagement through membership of its committees and a student feedback survey.

## Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

17 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.

18 The monitoring visit was carried out by and Dr Anne Miller (Coordinator) Ms Brenda Eade (Reviewer) on 2 September 2014.

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