



Educational Oversight: report of the extended monitoring visit of BRIT College Ltd, May 2015

Section 1: Outcome of the extended monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the extended monitoring visit, the review team concludes that BRIT College Ltd (the College) has made progress, but further improvement is required with implementing the action plan from the May 2014 [Educational Oversight](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 The number of students enrolled at the College at the time of the last review in May 2014 was 518. Student enrolment during this monitoring visit was 541 including 300 recruited in two intakes in 2015. All students are enrolled on the HND Business, with the other programmes forming part of the last review now having no students. The College may recruit to programmes provided by its other awarding partners in the future. It lost its Tier 4 status in May 2014.

3 The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) raised a query with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) regarding the College's student achievement and progression rates; this resulted in an extended monitoring visit.

Section 3: Findings from the extended monitoring visit

4 Actions are complete for the two features of good practice. The College continues to develop links with industry and other providers through a series of events, which students confirm are helpful opportunities to share knowledge and experience with representatives of other institutions. Examples include an industry event with the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers in August 2014 and an academic event on enhancing the student experience in March 2015. The College continues to publish its newsletter on a regular basis, with contributions from staff and students. The newsletter includes helpful information on upcoming events and the College's response to students' suggestions.

5 There has been satisfactory progress in the strategic management of learning resources. The College has introduced a Resource Allocation Policy, which explains the resource monitoring procedure. The Academic Management Team provides a suitable oversight of resource allocation. Students confirm that sufficient books and study materials are available in the library and online. The College has recently added to its online materials including journals. Lecturers provide teaching materials on the College intranet. The BTEC Academic Management Review Report for 2014-15 indicates that resources are appropriate for the number of students.

6 The College has made acceptable progress on producing programme handbooks incorporating relevant programme specifications. The Student Handbook now focuses on College-level information. It provides useful guidance on being a student in the College, both of an academic and a non-academic nature. For programme-level information, students refer to a College-produced course handbook which includes Pearson unit specifications as annexes. However, no programme aims and objectives for the specific modules taught at the

College are included in this Handbook. The College aims to include these in future versions of the Handbook. All handbooks are available at induction and on the intranet. Students find the handbooks helpful.

7 The College has introduced appropriate guidance and procedures on online security covering aspects of internal and external communication, the use of email and social media. This is part of a wider Communications Policy which the College uses for training at both staff and student induction sessions and staff development events. Both staff and students find the guidance helpful.

8 There has been only limited progress in establishing a system of annual review, which considers management information and supports enhancement. The College has produced an annual report, but this lacks sufficient information on a number of important areas, for example, student support and external reviews. It plans to include such information in the next annual review. While the annual report identifies broad areas for improvement, it fails to indicate what detailed actions would result from the review, for example, on how the College plans to address recruitment challenges and improve student progression. The Retention and Progression Analysis Report provides data on retention and progression and supplements the annual report. However, the Report lacks a thorough analysis of the data, which is made difficult by the multiple inconsistencies between the student records and the figures in the Report; for example, on student numbers and results in certain modules. The annual review is mentioned at Academic Management Team meetings, without details of any analysis or action plans.

9 The College is committed to the peer observation process although it is still being developed. As part of this development process observations were undertaken in autumn 2014 by a single member of staff who is also part of the management team. The overall report on the observations lacks both detail and sufficient action planning. It is unclear as to the nature of any action taken on poor performance. The College plans to involve more members of staff next year and feed the results into the appraisal process.

10 While the College has improved some aspects of staff development, there is a lack of a coordinated and strategic approach to recording staff development needs and activities. The College has a more rigorous recruitment process in place for academic staff. This involves an extended interview process, which entails assessment testing and an academic presentation. There is a timetable for staff development events on Higher Education Statistics Agency, QAA guidance, and internal verification. However, there is no clear rationale for staff development as a whole, including the choice of staff development events, or a thorough evaluation of its effectiveness. The College wishes to link peer observation and appraisal, but the process is still in development.

11 The College has recently changed its admission policies with the aim of improving student achievement. The BTEC Academic Management Review in January 2015 indicates that the College's admission policies have recently been improved. The College recognises that it had to improve its admission procedures partly because of the recruitment of students who lacked sufficient motivation. Admissions start with an online application. All candidates are interviewed after they have undertaken tests to ascertain, for example, their motivation to study. The College applies the latest Pearson requirements for language skills. These procedures have been applied to all students recruited in 2015. The College has regular meetings to review admissions procedures. The students recruited in 2015 have yet to complete any summative assessments, so it is too early to assess the impact of the new admission policies. All students undertake four modules per semester, with the programme designed for its 16 modules to be completed over a two-year period. Figures for recent cohorts of students show poor levels of achievement compared to the expected rate of progress. For example, after one year, of the 295 students in the September 2013 cohort

only 15 per cent had obtained seven or eight passes, 29 per cent had dropped out or failed and 20 per cent had obtained three or four passes. Figures for the January 2014 cohort for the first semester show only 40 per cent have three or four passes.

12 Assessment procedures are satisfactory. The last BTEC Academic Management Review is supportive of the College's methods of assessment. The College has recently improved its assessment procedures. Sampling and internal verification procedures now meet the requirements of Pearson. Internal verification and sampling procedures were significantly improved in the time between the last two BTEC Academic Management Reviews. The College revised its Assessment, Progression and Awards Policy in July 2014 using the guidance in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) and made a recent adjustment to the assignments and progression section to reflect revisions to Pearson regulations and the College's verification procedures.

13 The College has introduced a new policy for combatting plagiarism although as yet no student work has been through the new procedures. It has accepted the recommendations in the last BTEC Academic Management Review Report for the systematic use of anti-plagiarism software. From 1 May 2015, all students' summative work will be submitted through anti-plagiarism software. College policy allows students to use the software once to check for plagiarism, followed by a final submission. Evidence of plagiarism, in the form of a similarity index above 20 per cent, in the final submission will lead to penalty. However, no work has yet been put through the anti-plagiarism software, since the first relevant deadline for student work was after the visit.

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

14 Use of the Quality Code is extensive although some of the resultant policies lack detail on the procedures necessary to operationalise them. The College reviews its policies annually, taking guidance from the latest version of the Quality Code. It has mapped the Quality Code against its policies to ensure complete coverage. Each policy has sections relating explicitly to indicators in the relevant section of the Quality Code. All policies include a written commitment to using the Quality Code. However, the policies vary considerably in the amount of detail about how the College is going to exercise this commitment. For example, the Unfair Practice: Plagiarism, Collusion and Fabricated Data Policy provides a suitably detailed description of College procedures. The Equal Opportunities Policy and the Resource Allocation Policy are examples of policies where there is little detail as to how the commitment to the Quality Code is going to be implemented in terms of procedures. The policies with little detail do not provide effective guidance to staff or students.

15 The College aligns its delivery with the latest guidance from Pearson, which incorporates the requirements of the Qualifications and Credit Framework. Using this guidance, the College has increased the level of language proficiency required for student entry.

Section 5: Background to the extended monitoring visit

16 The extended 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 extended monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Peter Steer, Coordinator, and Dr Ana-Maria Pascal, Reviewer, on 14-15 May 2015.

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