



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Global Banking School Ltd, November 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 Global Banking School Ltd (the School) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the November 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 The School delivers undergraduate and postgraduate business programmes. Several new programmes commenced in September and October 2017: Pearson HND Business (Leicester College), BA (Hons) Business Management and BA (Hons) Business Management with Foundation franchised from Buckinghamshire New University (BNU), and MBA Global Banking franchised from the University of Bedfordshire. The School has postponed new enrolments to BA Business and Finance (Hons) and BA (Hons) Business and Finance top-up programme for the September 2017 intake in consultation with BNU (further discussed in paragraphs 14 and 15).

3 As a result of the introduction of these new programmes, total student numbers increased from 61 during the 2016 HER (AP), to 410 at the time of the monitoring visit. At the time of the HER (AP) visit, there were five full-time and 19 sessional academic staff, with 10 management/professional staff. There are currently 24 staff including seven full-time academic staff. An Associate Director of Student Services commenced in 2017.

4 As a result of these significant material changes in the permanent teaching staff and student numbers, the monitoring visit was extended (as outlined in the Educational Oversight Annual Monitoring guidance note) and these issues were discussed with the School at the visit. The School is able to support this increase in numbers by extra academic staff who have had full induction and training, extra student support through a new Student Services appointment, and a dedicated Student Support Manager to offer advice and guidance according to individual students' needs. The Resources Committee approved new physical resources including an extension to the library, a new conference room and student lounge.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The School is making acceptable progress in addressing the recommendations contained in the HER (AP) action plan. There are thorough and appropriate systems now in place; however, the School needs more time to completely evaluate and understand the impact on student experience and performance. There is now a clear strategy in place for strengthening and reviewing student engagement (paragraph 6). There has been an extensive revision of key quality documentation and the introduction of systematic version controls (paragraph 7). The now fully articulated Enhancement Strategy has nine measurable performance indicators with arrangements for its review (paragraph 8). Committees have been embedded into the quality assurance framework with standardised agendas and oversight by the Academic Board (paragraph 9). Academic staff and students now participate in annual monitoring through membership of the School's committees

(paragraph 9). The School has strengthened the mechanisms for effective oversight of recruitment and admissions through enhancing committee responsibilities and by fully revising the admission policy (paragraph 10). The arrangements for the identification and sharing of good practice across all teaching staff are comprehensive through programme committees, the Learning and Teaching Committee and peer observation (paragraph 11). The School has also maintained and developed the good practice identified by the 2016 HER (AP) by continuing to progress students' academic, personal and professional potential through the Global Banking Society and by working with its awarding bodies to provide direct student access to their career support services (paragraph 12).

6 There is a clear strategy in place for strengthening and reviewing student engagement. Students participate in meeting forums that review the learning environment, and these include the Student Representative Committee, Programme Committees, the School Learning and Teaching Committee and Academic Board. The School has appointed a Student Engagement Manager and early indicators suggest improved student engagement with their studies. Student representatives lead on the development of the Annual Student Submission, which is used as a source of information for the development of enhancement initiatives, and participate in staff selection interviews.

7 The School now ensures that key quality documentation is complete and current. The Academic Board reviews policies and procedures annually. The subsequent papers undergo a version control process to track changes and provide an audit trail. All documents have a standardised sign-off front sheet. The details of this process are in the Quality Manual. Staff and student members receive all documentation for comment prior to committee meetings and there is evidence that staff engage well with this process.

8 The School has a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The Enhancement Strategy has nine performance indicators that will be measured to assess improvement in the learner experience. The quality assurance procedures identify opportunities for enhancement and there have been staff development workshops. The activities will be reviewed biannually by the Learning and Teaching Committee. The process is cyclical and has the potential to enhance provision, but as the Strategy only became live in June 2017 it is too soon to assess its impact on the learning environment and overall student performance.

9 The School continues to embed its committee structure. There are standardised agenda items to ensure performance within the approved terms of reference. The agenda items and minutes reflect this standardisation and conformity to terms of reference. Programme Committee outcomes proceed to the Learning and Teaching Committee and then to the Academic Board, and this allows for systematic School-level oversight of its academic provision. The minutes and the discussions at the monitoring visit confirm that staff and students are active participants at School committees.

10 The School has implemented the recommendation to strengthen the mechanisms available to ensure the effective oversight of recruitment and admissions. It is clear now that the Learning and Teaching Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing student admissions through a regular Admissions Report, which is overseen by the Academic Board, with the Resource Committee responsible for the recruitment plan and targets. There have been some further developments to the admissions processes in response to identified problems with progression on the BA (Hons) Business and Finance (discussed in more detail in paragraphs 14-15). The School and BNU mainly attribute the poor student performance of the September 2016 intake to the admission of students with poor numeracy skills. This forced the School to revise its admission processes fully. For the BA and MBA programmes all applications are now submitted to the awarding bodies, with undergraduate applications processed through UCAS, and all applicants are interviewed. The School

receives applications directly for the Pearson provision, with the Director of Studies having the responsibility for offers. Admissions staff receive training, including an admission workshop at BNU. The School is currently comparing student performance with their admission profiles. As this process was only recently implemented the impact is yet to be fully understood and will require ongoing monitoring and review of the student selection and admission criteria. Students confirmed that the application and admission process was very supportive and that they received comprehensive and accurate information prior to enrolment and during studies.

11 There are comprehensive arrangements for the identification and sharing of good practice among teaching staff. Good practice and development initiatives are standing items on the agenda at Programme Committee Meetings, with cross-School opportunity to share information at the Learning and Teaching Committee and during meetings with the awarding bodies. Academic staff confirm that the peer observation system is a constructive process that also influences the sharing of best practice. The School has a programme of funded staff development activities which includes annual induction and funding for higher degrees. Awarding bodies provide further development opportunities and staff have access to BNU's online CPD programme.

12 The HER (AP) identified the strategic focus on employability and extensive careers support for students as a feature of good practice. The School has progressed this further to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Students participate in external enrichment activities such as the Valuation Olympiad and visits. They manage and organise the Global Banking Society with guest speakers and society events. Students appreciate the career preparation and advice and the opportunity of supplementary studies to prepare for professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) membership examinations.

13 The School has effective annual programme monitoring procedures which are outlined in the Quality Manual. Programme leaders are responsible for preparing a performance report for review by the Programme Committee, with further oversight and approval at the School Learning and Teaching Committee. The process is supported by survey data, student metrics, external examiner reports and the School's committee structure, with ultimate responsibility resting with the Academic Board. The School produces an annual quality assurance report that summarises all aspects of the student experience across its portfolio of programmes. This report culminates in the publication of a School-wide action plan, which is a cyclical and robust monitoring tool. Students complete surveys on each module and committee minutes demonstrate that students and staff are involved in annual monitoring through participation in the committee meetings. The awarding bodies require annual reports for their provision and this adds significant strength to the annual monitoring processes.

14 The School is making satisfactory use of data in the management of its provision. The data and the annual monitoring report confirm that student performance on the inaugural delivery of the BA (Hons) in Business and Finance programme was significantly below levels expected. For the full three-year degree programme, of the 23 students admitted one progressed to the next level, a progression rate of four per cent. The remaining students have either withdrawn or have transferred to the new BA (Hons) in Business Management. For the one-year top-up degree programme, of the 21 students admitted only four successfully completed, a completion rate of 19 per cent. Further cohorts of students were admitted to both variants of the programme in January 2017. While programme data provides evidence of improved submission rates, the assessment outcomes and marks indicate that students in this cohort are also struggling with the content of the programme.

15 These student outcomes prompted the School and its awarding body to undertake an urgent review of provision, leading to frequent progress reports and the immediate implementation of an agreed action plan for improvement. In parallel, a strategic decision was made to teach out these programmes and postpone new entrants. The action plan for improvement includes an interview and a numeracy test for all applicants, a structured formative assessment process, regular submission of summative work, stricter application of the attendance policy, extra tutorial provision and use of learning plans. BNU now has formal monitoring oversight with operational daily supervision and support. The School currently supports students, with a BNU Principal Lecturer attending once a week, a BNU full-time lecturer attending four days a week and a dedicated Student Engagement Manager. The actions taken were immediate and appropriate; however, the impact on student performance is yet to be fully understood and this will require ongoing monitoring and review of admission requirements, early intervention strategies and wider student support mechanisms.

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

16 The School's Quality Assurance Manual and wider policies specifically align with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The documents are continuously reviewed and are made available to students on the virtual learning environment. Since the last HER (AP) the School has developed a strategy and action plan to support the work of the recently introduced Learning and Teaching Committee that reports to the Academic Board.

17 The awarding bodies are responsible for programme design for the BA and MBA programmes, which allows for wider input to ensure alignment with external reference points. They also provide invaluable oversight, ensuring that curriculum and associated delivery issues are continuously monitored and reviewed to maintain alignment with external reference points. The programme standardisation meetings ensure that the intended learning outcomes align to the requirements set out by each awarding body.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

18 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.

19 The monitoring visit was carried out by Neil Lucas, Reviewer, and Catherine Fairhurst, Coordinator, on 14 and 15 November 2017.

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