Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of London College of Business, February 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 London College of Business (the College) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the previous monitoring visit www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Reports/Pages/REO-LCB-AM-13.aspx.

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2   The College's validation agreement with the University of Wales (the University) ended in April 2013. The College is fulfilling its obligation to support all the students enrolled on the awarding body's programmes, until they complete their courses in 2015 to ensure they are not negatively affected. It now intends to recruit students onto its BTEC HNC/HND programmes with Pearson to replace the BA (Hons) degree awarded by the University. In December 2013, the College received approval from the Association of Business Practitioners (ABP) to teach its Business and Information Systems courses at level 7, which it plans to introduce in April 2014.

3   Student numbers are 46 per cent less than at the last monitoring visit at 91. Of these students, 48 are completing the University's programmes and 43 are enrolled on the Pearson BTEC Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management. Members of the Senior Management Team are currently the main tutors on all the College's programmes.

4   The College reviewed all its policies in November 2013, making them clear, complete and sustainable for the requirements of its current and future awarding body and organisations. As part of this review, the College introduced the new Staff Communications Policy, which staff stated has created a culture of transparency, collaboration and cooperative working. Although the College has introduced a system of annual reviews of these policies with a clearly defined calendar, the new decision-making procedure embedded within the Staff Communications Policy empowers all members of staff to make changes where necessary.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

5   The College continues to use the action plan developed following the Review for Educational Oversight in 2012 and has made an effort to address most of its elements.

6   The College actively engages with its own annual review processes and those that the awarding body and organisations initiate. It has also formalised its processes for the management of academic standards through a structure with clear lines of responsibilities, and the Staff Communications Policy discussed in paragraph 4. The Academic Committee and Senior Management Team meet to consider the outcomes of annual reviews and take forward any actions required. For example, the Pearson annual review of January 2014 highlighted the need for the College to include online students from diverse cultures in its pastoral and social programmes. Following a review of research and good practice literature

in this area, the College now invites online students to participate in the Student Forum. Students commented positively about the all-round support they receive from the College.

7   The College has extended the good practice of the well developed online MBA programme providing students with extensive resources and learning opportunities to the Pearson Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management programme. Tutors upload relevant materials from the onsite pool of resources onto the College's virtual learning environment, and signpost students to them. The College records the online sessions as well as many of the normal teaching sessions for the benefit of the online students who cannot participate live. Online students are satisfied with the support and the access to resources that they get.

8   The College continues to implement its Teaching and Learning Strategy. Driven by a clear assessment policy which the Teaching and Learning Strategy embeds, the quality of written feedback to students has improved. Students praised the level of formative feedback they receive, and external examiners' reports show that the final feedback the College presents to students is satisfactory. Students also articulated the variety of methods their tutors apply in their teaching, including lecture and seminar style sessions, and tutors are conversant with the themes and aims of the strategy.

9   In response to the recommendation aligned to the enhancement of career-related learning opportunities, the College now runs a careers' service for its students. Staff spoke positively, and the students concurred, about visits to relevant companies and public organisations, which enhance student learning with practical examples of activities such as decision-making and convening meetings. The College intends to develop further industry links to provide students with workplace experiences once it transitions more fully into its planned suite of business and information systems programmes.

10   To maintain the quality of teaching it provides to its students, the College runs a programme of regular peer teaching reviews. Recorded teaching sessions discussed in paragraph 7 present a unique and additional opportunity for the staff to discuss possible improvements and to reinforce good practice relating to their teaching.

11   The College has introduced a clear approval and sign-off system for the information on the learning opportunities available to its students. The students stated that they knew where to find the information they need and were satisfied with its accuracy.

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

12   The College has made little further progress in engaging with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) or other external reference points since the last monitoring visit. In its new set of policies, the College does not refer to the Quality Code; however, the Teaching and Learning Strategy quotes the Northern Ireland Credit accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) level descriptors. Senior management maintains that it only uses the NICATS wording, but in fact references the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) through its links with the University. Senior management also stated that the College engages with the Quality Code through its links with Pearson. However, the awarding organisation's annual monitoring review report of January 2014 shows that it is the College's responsibility to reference the Quality Code.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

13   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.

14   The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Christopher Mabika (Coordinator) and Dr Julie Andreshak-Behrman (Reviewer) on 25 February 2014.