

## Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of London School of Academics Ltd, December 2015

### 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 the London School of Academics Ltd (the School) has not made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the December 2013 [Review for Specific Course Designation](#).

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

2 The School is currently offering the City and Guilds of London Institute's Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training (DET), which has replaced the former Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS). There has been a slight increase in enrolment with 64 students currently enrolled, compared to 54 students enrolled at this time last year. Further enrolment is anticipated for January 2016.

3 Of the 2013-14 cohort, 94 per cent successfully completed the DTLLS course; two were granted extensions and three were withdrawn. All students are UK students, with no international recruitment, and all fulfil the City and Guilds' requirement of Level 2 adult literacy. Admissions continue to be based on telephone and face-to-face interviews, a personal statement handwritten on site, a professional skills test, and checking of evidence of prior qualifications and personal identity.

4 The July 2015 City and Guilds' Centre Activity Report and External Quality Assurance Sampling Visit concluded that the School continues to deliver the teaching programme in accordance with City and Guilds' requirements and recommended Direct Claims Status for the DET programme.

5 Annual monitoring is conducted by means of analysis of student statistics, review of staff, student and internal verifier feedback, review of the action plan at staff meetings and the production of an annual monitoring report. Information from attendance at training events with external bodies, including City and Guilds and QAA, is also considered.

### Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

6 The School has maintained its good practice of providing a supportive environment, and identification of students' specific needs, through the admissions and induction process. Students confirmed that this support continues throughout their time at the School.

7 The level of progress made on recommendations contained in the action plan from the 2013 QAA review has been very limited. Only one has been fully implemented: the formal recording and tracking of assessments and mitigation and extension decisions. Most have been only partially implemented, such as a formal policy for checking and signing off published information, and the aligning of policies and procedures with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). Others, that is the recommendations to develop formal student representation and to implement a virtual learning environment and student portal, have not been implemented.

8 Information is collected on individual unit performance, course statistics and student feedback but these are not yet being used effectively to enhance academic standards and opportunities to meet the advisable action in the 2014 action plan.

9 The School has now effectively formalised the recording and tracking of assessments and mitigation and extension decisions.

10 A formal policy and procedure for checking and signing off published information has been introduced. However, current documentation focuses predominantly on sign-off for extracurricular activities rather than official School documentation. Version and publication dates are not yet included on all policy documents. Students confirmed that they have access to published information such as handbooks and policy documents.

11 There is an 'open-door' policy for informal contact with students. Meetings are arranged between management and students, or student representatives, according to need or request rather than any formal schedule. These meetings are minuted but only informally and without any clear agenda, action points or subsequent monitoring or evaluation.

12 Students report that they feel listened to and that any concerns they may have are acted upon. However, there is no evidence that student representatives are formally involved in any academic or management meetings within the organisational structure of the School.

13 Students now have a detailed handbook, which includes information on policies and procedures and links to associated forms. Students report that they find the handbook very useful and they can access an electronic copy if they wish. However, forms relevant to students, such as appeal forms, are not yet available on the website and online information on key policies and procedures is also quite limited.

14 Individual learning plans have been further developed and are implemented for all students. There is scope to develop a stronger focus on learning processes and educational progress, rather than on practical issues, such as electronic and library facilities, and more can be done to effectively capture student progress and achievement.

15 A process is now in place for capturing and recording student employability after graduation and this information is discussed at staff meetings but not yet fully considered in annual monitoring.

16 Feedback to students has been developed and now includes appropriate annotation on scripts at first marking as well as teaching observation feedback. Students report finding both written and verbal feedback helpful. The Internal Quality Assurer samples a range of scripts and makes verbal reports and written comments, although more can be done to ensure that students are informed of these and are made aware of second marking.

17 A procedure for staff peer observation is in place, incorporating verbal and written feedback, but not yet fully implemented as observation forms are not always signed off, and it is not always clear who conducts the observations or makes the written comments. Developmental feedback is limited and there is no evidence of formal tracking of peer observations to ensure that all staff are observed on a scheduled basis. No formal process for sharing any good practice from these observations has been implemented although informal feedback sometimes takes place in staff meetings.

18 The School is now renting an additional room, with an interactive whiteboard and upgraded computer facilities, which is popular with students. A bookcase has now been installed in the School office, with some relevant texts for student reference and loan, and a member of staff has taken on librarian responsibilities. However, a comprehensive resources

policy to support the upgrading of library and multimedia facilities has not yet been developed or implemented as per the action plan.

19 Enquiries around installing a virtual learning environment (VLE) have been started but not progressed and the recommendation to install a VLE has not been implemented due to cost, although investigations into less expensive, or more limited, options could be considered. The recommendation to create a student portal has also not been implemented, and there is no evidence of this having been considered. Some students identified the value of having a VLE to support their learning.

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

20 Some progress has been made in working with the Quality Code. There has been a mapping exercise relating the School's existing policy documents and procedures with Quality Code indicators. However, although various documents have been updated, the review team found little evidence of the Quality Code being used to specifically enhance academic standards or learning opportunities as recommended in the previous review.

21 Staff have some familiarity with the Quality Code, based on informal discussions and attendance at QAA events. However, the staff training day on the Quality Code, included in the 2013 action plan, has not yet been implemented. There is also almost no mention of the Quality Code in either the staff or student handbooks.

22 The School holds regular meetings with its Internal Quality Assurer to ensure that the requirements of its awarding organisation, City and Guilds, are being met. A successful transition has been made to the new DET, which encompasses new assessments, although the students report finding some of the new City and Guilds' assignments repetitive. This has been fed back to the awarding organisation.

## **Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit**

23 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.

24 The monitoring visit was carried out by Ms Jacqueline Young (Coordinator) and Mr Brian Whitehead (Reviewer) on 14 December 2015.

**QAA1460 - R4858 - Feb 16**

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2016  
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB  
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)