Adapted Review for Specific Course Designation by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

UK Business College Ltd

April 2014

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Key findings about UK Business College Ltd

As a result of its adapted Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in April 2014, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of ATHE Ltd.

The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities it offers on behalf of this awarding organisation.

The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice**:

- the student briefing paper on the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 2.2).

Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of **recommendations** for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:

- review the College policies regularly (paragraph 1.3)
- complete the annual monitoring and review process (paragraph 1.4).

The team considers that it would be **desirable** for the provider to:

- continue staff development on the Quality Code (paragraph 1.6)
- extend standardisation and internal moderation to summative assessments (paragraph 1.7)
- strengthen employer-related activities (paragraph 2.3)
- further develop the information updating policy (paragraph 3.2).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the adapted [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)[1] conducted by [QAA](#) at UK Business College Ltd (the College), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of ATHE Ltd. The review was carried out by Ms Kausar Malik, Mr Paul Monroe (reviewers) and Mrs Catherine Fairhurst (Coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the *[Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013](#)*.[2] Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the College and the awarding organisation, meetings with staff and students, and the report of the review by the Independent School Inspectorate (ISI).

QAA carries out an adapted review for providers who are also reviewed by another approved body. The *Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013* provides further details.

The review team also considered the provider's use of the relevant external reference points:

- the guidelines provided by the awarding organisation
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

Please note that if you are unfamiliar with any of the terms used in this report you can find them in the [Glossary](#).

The College is a small college located on one floor of a building in Wembley, North West London. It was formed in February 2012 as a private limited company with the intention of offering a range of programmes in business and management. Students were enrolled for the first time in January 2014. There are 31 full-time higher education students enrolled and at the time of the review it offered programmes from one awarding organisation, ATHE Ltd. There are five management and administrative staff, two of whom teach.

At the time of the review, the College offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding organisation and with full-time student numbers in brackets:

ATHE Ltd
- Level 4 Extended Diploma in Management (2)
- Level 5 Extended Diploma in Management (6)
- Level 4 Extended Diploma in Management for Health and Social Care (0)
- Level 5 Extended Diploma in Management for Health and Social Care (0)
- Level 6 Diploma in Health Care Management (3)
- Level 7 Diploma in Health Care Management (7)
- Level 6 Diploma in Management (7)
- Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management (6).

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[1] [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx](#)
[2] [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx](#)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College delivers the programmes according to the programme specifications, syllabus, and assessment regulations produced by ATHE Ltd. Although it makes no contribution to the curriculum design, the College is responsible for the content of units and the learning and teaching methods. The teaching staff provide formative assessment by setting, marking and giving feedback on assignments. Assignments for summative assessment are provided by ATHE Ltd, assessed by the College and moderated by ATHE Ltd. The College encourages students to provide continuous feedback on teaching, learning, administration and support.

Recent developments

The College is relatively new. It has plans for expansion by developing programmes with other awarding bodies and organisations. Scottish Qualifications Authority accreditation was confirmed during the drafting of the report and the College is accredited to deliver HND and HNC courses from April 2014

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying higher education programmes were invited to present a submission to the review team. They met to discuss their views and a student submission was written with support from the staff. A group of students met the Coordinator at the preparatory meeting in advance of the visit. Four students from programmes of different levels, including the elected student representative, participated in a helpful meeting during the review.

Detailed findings about UK Business College Ltd

1 Academic standards

How effectively does the College fulfil its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 The management team of the College is small but effective in managing its responsibilities for academic standards. The Principal, who has a teaching role, is responsible for academic standards, assisted by a part-time Academic Adviser. The current staff undertake all management roles. The Registrar is responsible for administration and student welfare, while the Quality Control Manager manages the academic work of the College. As it grows and develops, College intends to add to the management team.

1.2 The committee structure is new but coherent and appropriate for the size of the College. The Teaching and Learning Committee reports to the Management Committee which in turn reports to the Board of Directors. All the committees have useful terms of reference. The Teaching and Learning Committee and the Management Committee have met twice. These meetings are carefully minuted and identify required action.

1.3 The College has a wide-ranging Quality and Operations Manual based on the precepts of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). This describes the College's regulations and quality assurance processes to provide a framework for the delivery and management of the programmes. The Quality and Operations Manual contains a wide range of policies as well as assessment and admission requirements, programme regulations and annual programme monitoring. The policies and procedures are newly developed and are not yet embedded in the higher education provision. It is **advisable** that the College review these policies regularly and embed them into all its higher educational provision.

1.4 The College has a comprehensive programme annual monitoring and review procedure described in the Annual Monitoring and Quality Control document. The procedure includes module reports, student evaluation, and student progression and admissions data. The Teaching and Learning Committee will consider the annual monitoring reports of all programmes on completion of the first year. It would be **advisable** for the College to complete the annual monitoring and review process as planned to inform the quality processes.

How effectively does the College make use of external reference points to manage academic standards?

1.5 ATHE Ltd is responsible for ensuring that its processes and procedures take into account the key external reference points, including *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). It is also responsible for sections of the Quality Code related to managing the standards of the subject and qualification, the programme approval processes, externality and assessment of the learning outcomes.

1.6 The College has mapped to the Quality Code its policies and procedures relating to the admission and learning and assessment of students and to the standards recommended by the Independent Schools Inspectorate. The College is providing staff development to assist the knowledge of the Quality Code. It would be **desirable** for the College to continue staff development into the purpose and use of the Quality Code to assist their complete understanding.

How does the College use external moderation, verification or examining to assure academic standards?

1.7 The students are assessed by summative assignments set by ATHE Ltd. These are marked internally by the College staff and externally moderated by ATHE Ltd. Current students have not yet undertaken any final summative assessment. All assessors are marking to a common standard for internally set formative assignments. This is confirmed by the Teaching and Learning Committee minutes. The College intends to use a similar system for the internal assessment of final summative assignments. It would be **desirable** for the College to extend the use of standardisation and internal moderation procedures to summative assessments to confirm a common standard.

1.8 The College has a management and committee structure which are effective in managing its responsibilities for delivering academic standards. It has suitable procedures to manage its higher education programmes in accordance with the awarding organisation's requirements. There is a comprehensive programme monitoring and review procedure to be used at the end of each academic year. The policies and procedures are not yet embedded in the higher education provision. The College makes use of a range of external reference sources. It effectively uses standardisation of formative assessment as a form of internal moderation and intends to use the same procedures for summative assessment.

> The review team has **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of its awarding organisation.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

How effectively does the College fulfil its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 The College has effective systems in place to manage its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The processes reflect those for managing academic standards, as described in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2. The College's responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities are monitored by the Teaching and Learning Committee.

How effectively does the College make use of external reference points to manage and enhance learning opportunities?

2.2 The College's use of external reference points are as described in paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6. The College uses the Quality Code as an external reference point to inform its policies and procedures for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. For example, the Student Handbook is fully compliant with the Quality Code and the College meets its responsibilities for ensuring equal opportunities. The College has recently provided students with a briefing paper of the Quality Code and how it may affect them. This publication for students is **good practice**.

2.3 The College plans to deliver a post-graduation module to students at the end of their programme. This will focus on writing their curriculum vitae and finding employment. The College has arranged with a local employer to deliver a series of lectures in the summer term. The College plans to create further links with employers. It would be **desirable** for the College to strengthen these employer-related activities within programme delivery to develop students' employability skills and enhance their learning opportunities.

How does the College engage students in its quality assurance processes?

2.4   The College has effective procedures for engaging with students. This is achieved in a variety of ways, including a suggestion box, end of module questionnaires, a website survey and student feedback on tutor performance. There is an elected student representative on the Teaching and Learning Committee who makes an effective contribution. The students say they are able to approach the Principal and teaching staff at any time with any issues, concerns or suggestions. The students confirm that the College staff listen to student feedback and take prompt action when required.

What are the College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

2.5   The College has a comprehensive policy for the continuing professional development of staff to maintain and enhance the quality of leaning opportunities. The Principal is responsible for the operation of this policy. A continuing professional development plan supports the policy and records staff training, staff performance reviews, observations of teaching, student feedback and individual staff development needs. The Management Committee agrees the plan and approves its budget.

2.6   The Academic Adviser observes teaching staff, comments on the quality of teaching and analyses student feedback. The Teaching and Learning Committee receives this report on learning and teaching and forwards it to the Management Committee for action. All new staff complete an induction programme, which is surveyed by a questionnaire. The internal verification process provides assessment training.

2.7   In order to maintain and enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities, the College has effective management procedures and relates to external reference points successfully. Students fully engage in the quality assurance processes through a variety of methods. Staff participate in staff development opportunities through the continuous professional development plan.

> The review team has **confidence** that the College is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the intended learning opportunities it provides for students.

3   Information about learning opportunities

How effective are the College's arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy?

3.1   The College's website is effective, colourful and easily navigable but not yet complete. The Student Handbook and prospectus are clear, comprehensive documents and the students say they use the Handbook regularly. The wide-ranging Quality and Operations Manual describes the College policies and procedures to staff.

3.2   The College has a satisfactory plan to manage the provision of information about learning opportunities and has produced a concise updating policy. The College plans that the Academic Adviser will check revise and report on all documents each term and the website each quarter. The Management Committee will receive these reports. This Committee approves any changes to information which are then signed off by the Principal. It would be **desirable** for the College to further develop the updating policy and continue to assure that the information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.3   The College recognises all the information that it is responsible for producing. The College website, Student Handbook, prospectus and Quality and Operations Manual are effective and clear. There is a concise policy and effective procedures for managing the production of information.

> The team concludes that reliance **can** be placed on the information that the College produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Action plan[3]

UK Business College Ltd action plan relating to the Adapted Review of Specific Course Designation April 2014						
Good practice	**Intended outcomes**	**Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes**	**Target date(s)**	**Action by**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation (process or evidence)**
The review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
• the student briefing paper on the UK Quality Code (paragraph 2.2).	Continually update students with copies of the relevant chapter of the Quality Code	Include a briefing on the Quality Code in the Induction Pack Send questionnaires to students regarding their understanding of the Quality Code and how they have benefited from it	Termly from September 2014	Academic Adviser and Registrar	Teaching and Learning Committee	Analysis of questionnaires Minutes of Teaching and Learning Committee
Advisable	**Intended outcomes**	**Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes**	**Target date(s)**	**Action by**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation (process or evidence)**
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:						
• review College policies	Policies are relevant and fit for purpose	Review annually academic policies	From September	Teaching and Learning	Management Committee	Analysis of questionnaires

[3] The College has been required to develop this action plan to follow up on good practice and address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan, in conjunction with the College's awarding organisation.

regularly (paragraph 1.3)		Monitoring of teachers Questionnaires to students and staff	2014	Committee		Performance of students and progress of staff Minutes of committees
• complete the annual monitoring and review process paragraph 1.4).	Efficient assessment of teaching standards, student performance and effectiveness of programmes	Comparison of year-on-year data from one course to another and all the activities listed on the Annual Monitoring Review form Provide feedback to awarding body to improve syllabus content and assessment methods	January 2015	Teaching and Learning Committee and Management Committee	Management Committee and Board of Directors	Analysis of data on, for example, applications, student performance and re-enrolment Comments from awarding organisation Committee minutes
Desirable	**Intended outcomes**	**Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes**	**Target date/s**	**Action by**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation (process or evidence)**
The team considers that it would be **desirable** for the College to:						
• continue staff development on the Quality Code (paragraph 1.6)	Improve staff knowledge of the Quality Code	Monitor revisions to the Quality Code by QAA Include staff knowledge of the Quality Code as part of staff reviews Set up Quality Code subcommittee	September 2014	Academic Adviser	Teaching and Learning Committee	Analyses of Questionnaires Better exam results Minutes of Teaching and Learning

						Committee
• extend standardisation and internal moderation to summative assessments (paragraph 1.7)	To bring the marking of summative assignments up to the same standard as that for formative assignments	Regular teaching staff subcommittee meetings	September 2014	Academic Head	Teaching and Learning Committee	Staff progress reports Reports from awarding organisation Minutes of meetings
• strengthen employer-related activities (paragraph 2.3)	Make students more aware of the real world of business and of work	Contact more local businesses/societies for visits/guest speakers Integrate these into course timetables Introduce courses with work placements if possible	September 2014	Principal and Registrar	Teaching and Learning Committee and Management Committee	Analysis of student questionnaires on benefits Feedback from companies and guest speakers Committee minutes
• further develop the information updating policy (paragraph 3.2).	Make sure the College website is up to date and consistent with the College's other publications	Regular checks, and questionnaires to students and staff on the website's effectiveness	September 2014	Academic Adviser and Information Technology Manager	Management Committee	Favourable comments from users of website and the College's other publications Negligible number of complaints

About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA's aims are to:

- meet students' needs and be valued by them
- safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
- drive improvements in UK higher education
- improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.

QAA conducts reviews of higher education institutions and publishes reports on the findings. QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents to help safeguard standards and improve quality.

More information about the work of QAA is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk.

More detail about Review for Specific Course Designation can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx.

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the *Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013*.[4]

academic quality A comprehensive term referring to how, and how well, higher education providers manage teaching and learning opportunities to help students progress and succeed.

academic standards The standards set and maintained by degree-awarding bodies for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standards**.

awarding body A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree-awarding powers, research degree-awarding powers or university title).

awarding organisation An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

differentiated judgements In a Review for Specific Course Designation, separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

enhancement The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

external examiner An independent expert appointed by an institution to comment on student achievement in relation to established academic standards and to look at approaches to assessment.

framework for higher education qualifications A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*.

good practice A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

learning outcomes What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

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[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

operational definition A formal definition of a term, which establishes exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

programme (of study) An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

programme specifications Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of **programmes** of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

provider(s) (of higher education) Organisations that deliver higher education. In the UK they may be a degree-awarding body or another organisation that offers programmes of higher education on behalf of degree-**awarding bodies** or **awarding organisations**. In the context of Review for Specific Course Designation the term means an independent college.

public information Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

quality See **academic quality**.

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

reference points Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured. Internal reference points may be used by providers for purposes of self-regulation; external ones are used and accepted throughout the higher education community for the checking of standards and quality.

subject benchmark statement A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

threshold academic standards The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks for higher education qualifications** and **subject benchmark statements**. See also **academic standards**.

widening participation Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.