



Concerns about standards and quality in higher education

British Institute of Technology Ltd, July 2019

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Introduction

1 This report is a stage two investigation of the British Institute of Technology Ltd as a result of an application to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) [Concerns Scheme](#).¹

Concerns raised

2 A number of allegations about the British Institute of Technology Ltd (the Institute) were sent to QAA in May 2019 regarding its collaborative relationship with the European University of Business (EUB).

3 Following an initial inquiry, concerns remained whether the Institute:

- has adequate procedures in place that enable it to carry out sufficient due diligence when establishing collaborative partnerships
- is enrolling students to programmes of an institution that has no degree awarding powers in the UK
- is providing misleading information to students at, and prior to, the time of enrolment as to the standing of their programme.

The investigation process

4 QAA initiated a stage two investigation, which took place on 17 July 2019. The QAA concerns team was Dr Carol Vielba (Reviewer) and Dr Monika Ruthe (QAA Case Officer). The Institute cooperated fully with the investigation.

Result of the investigation

5 The investigation team reached a conclusion of moderate issues found. The team made a number of recommendations for the provider to address.

Explanation of findings

Due diligence procedures

6 The British Institute of Technology Ltd has been in a collaborative relationship with the European University of Business, Poland and its predecessor, the University College of Business Poznan for a number of years. The first collaborative agreement was signed in 2015 and the most recent agreement dates from July 2018. EUB Poland is accredited to deliver degree programmes in management, philology and pedagogy. (While MBA programmes are not considered degree programmes in Poland EUB does not need accreditation to offer them as long as it is accredited to offer degree programmes in a similar field.) The 2018 Memorandum of Agreement states that the agreement applies to validated and franchised programmes. Such programmes lead to EUB awards subject to students demonstrating through formal assessment that they have fulfilled the required programme learning outcomes.

7 The Institute has a clear policy and procedures in place which it utilises when establishing collaborative relationships with degree-awarding bodies/organisations. The policy allows for financial and academic due diligence to be carried out. The purpose of the academic due diligence is to establish whether the proposed partner has degree

¹ QAA Concerns Scheme: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/how-to-make-a-complaint

awarding powers and review the quality processes, organisational and management structures as well as the resource base pertinent to the proposed collaboration. The Institute confirmed that the policy and procedures apply to all collaborative relationships and have been utilised when the collaboration with EUB was established. As part of its due diligence process the Institute reviewed EUB's degree awarding powers authorisation from the Polish Ministry of Science and Education, its constitution and quality management procedures and found them to be satisfactory. Subsequently, a draft collaborative agreement was drawn up by EUB Poland and after internal deliberations eventually ratified by the Institute's Executive Committee.

8 The collaborative agreement signed in July 2018 is between European University of Business Ltd, the UK centre of the European University of Business, Poland and the Institute. The European University of Business Ltd is based in Forest Gate at the same address as the Institute, and was established in 2017 as BITE Academy Ltd. After further changes in name, the company became known as EUOB Ltd, and in August 2018 its name changed again to European University of Business Ltd. The agreement was signed by the then Rector of the parent Polish institution, as Vice-Chancellor of European University of Business. There is no reference in the document to the European University of Business in Poland. All clauses within the agreement refer to the policies, regulations, processes and procedures of European University of Business Ltd and do not indicate that they derive from the policies, regulations, processes and procedures of European University of Business, Poland. There is no statement in the collaborative agreement regarding the role of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland, or any oversight by the European University of Business, Poland.

Enrolling students to programmes of an institution that has no degree awarding powers in the UK

9 The Institute explained that programmes on which students are enrolled were validated by the private Polish-based European University of Business, through its UK centre known as European University of Business Ltd which does not have UK degree awarding powers. However, the Vice-Chancellor of the European University Business Ltd, UK centre, stated that its parent institution in Poland had degree awarding powers which it was permitted to devolve to its local centres overseas. Local centres are permitted to develop partnerships, such as the partnership with the Institute, for the delivery of franchised or validated provision. Students studying on validated degrees at the Institute are thus awarded Polish degrees under the auspices of the European University of Business. Quality assurance is provided by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland.

10 The devolved nature of the degree awarding powers exercised by European University of Business Ltd, and the wording of the collaborative agreement, have given rise to the erroneous conclusion that the Institute is enrolling students onto programmes of an institution that has no degree awarding powers in the UK. This is not the case. However, to prevent such misunderstandings in future, the Institute is **recommended** to ensure greater clarity and transparency regarding the role and standing of its validating partner. Clarification of the respective roles of the UK-based European University of Business Ltd, the Polish European University of Business, and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland, in the collaborative agreement in relation to academic standards and quality of the Institute's awards and an indication that it is the European University of Business in Poland that is the awarding body are desirable.

Providing misleading information to students at and prior to the time enrolment as to the standing of their programme

11 The Institute's website advertises several qualifications of the European University of Business offered at the Institute. There is no indication that these are degrees awarded by a Polish institution. While programme handbooks make no mention of the awarding body, the programme specifications do indicate that these are Polish qualifications.

12 The Institute stated that during the admissions process applicants are made aware of the nature of the degree they would be awarded and by whom it was awarded. Students on the MBA programme which they commenced prior to the establishment of the European University of Business Ltd, and the most recent collaborative agreement, stated that they had been made aware that they would be awarded a Polish degree. The offer letter to prospective students also indicates that, if successful, they will be awarded a Polish qualification.

13 The absence of clear information on the awarding body to applicants on the website and in programme handbooks is potentially misleading. The current name of the awarding body could easily be mistaken for a provider of UK degrees by a prospective student looking at the Institute's website. While the Institute takes steps to ensure that students are informed about the nature of their degrees during application and prior to accepting an offer of a place, to ensure that applicants and students are fully aware of the standing of their prospective degrees, it is **recommended** that the Institute ensures that all publicity and course documentation, including handbooks, indicate clearly the name and status of the European University of Business in Poland as the awarding body and the regulatory framework which governs the standards of its awards.

Conclusion

14 The QAA concerns team found moderate issues. This means that the Institute requires improvement to meet the expectations of the Quality Code, in particular the Core practice in relation to partnerships.

15 In light of the conclusions of the report, the Institute will provide an action plan to QAA within four weeks of publication setting out how it will address these weaknesses.

Recommendations

16 The Institute should:

- ensure greater clarity and transparency regarding the role and standing of its validating partner and indicate that it is the European University of Business in Poland that is the awarding body (paragraph 10)
- ensure that all publicity and course documentation, including handbooks, indicate clearly the name and status of the European University of Business in Poland as the awarding body and the regulatory framework which governs the standards of its awards (paragraph 13)

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