



## Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of the British Institute of Technology Ltd, October 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 the British Institute of Technology, England (the Institute) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision from the October 2015 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#) and the 2016 [annual monitoring visit](#).

### 2 Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 At the time of the visit the Institute had 26 staff, and 117 students studying on BA (Hons) Administration and BSc (Hons) Business Information Technology programmes offered under a partnership agreement with London Metropolitan University (LMU). This partnership is being terminated, and both programmes are on teach-out. The Institute continues to offer degrees with the European University College of Business (EUCB), formerly Poznan University, Poland, though no students had been recruited at the time of the visit. The Institute is currently negotiating to offer a foundation degree and three honours degrees with another potential partner to commence in February 2018, as well as seeking to validate four further bachelor's degrees with a different London university.

### 3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The Institute has made acceptable progress taking forward actions from its own action plan, which includes outcomes from the 2015 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) and the 2016 monitoring visit. Employability embedded within the curriculum continues to be a strength (paragraph 4), and the information in handbooks has been updated (paragraph 5) to fully meet the HER (AP) recommendation requirement. The management of quality and standards reflects awarding body requirements (paragraph 6), and students have been notified of the termination of the partnership with LMU (paragraph 7). Students continue to be provided with effective study skills support (paragraph 8). Student engagement and the student voice inform priorities for resource development, including online materials (paragraphs 9 and 10). Clear admissions systems are in place, though entry requirements are not always included clearly in programme handbooks (paragraph 11). The annual monitoring of programmes meets the requirements of awarding bodies and is utilised to support programme enhancement (paragraphs 12-14). Oversight of quality and standards is maintained through the deliberative governance structure.

4 A new Action Plan has been developed by the Institute to reflect ongoing areas of development and build on existing good practices. The Institute continues to utilise its Industry and Business Advisory Board to support the ongoing review of its programme offer, and to ensure that current employment trends are kept under review to inform programme development and new partnership initiatives. The development of a foundation degree with a new partner institution fits with the Institute's agenda of supporting student employability with the inclusion of work-based projects.

5 Clear systems are in place to review information available to stakeholders and ensure that it is up to date. Programme Leaders review Programme Handbooks at least annually in line with the requirements of the partner awarding body. The handbooks for the EUCB programmes have now been updated to ensure the accuracy and currency of information to meet previous action plan requirements, though at the time of the visit no students were studying on EUCB provision.

6 External examiner reports reflect satisfaction with the standards and the quality of teaching and learning delivered by the Institute. Requirements for EUCB and LMU programmes in setting and maintaining academic standards are also reflected in the Institute's own quality process, including the internal verification of assessed work, assessment moderation and staff development to support understanding of individual institution requirements. To further assure the benchmarking of quality processes, the EUCB programmes have been mapped to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

7 Students enrolled on the LMU programmes were formally notified of the University's decision to terminate its partnership with the Institute in May 2017. The Institute and the University have agreed teach-out arrangements to ensure students are able to complete their degrees. New provision is being negotiated with two potential partner universities, including a foundation degree and honours degrees.

8 Appropriate systems are in place to continue to identify and provide support with study skills. Academic interviews are used to identify additional learning support needs. Formative assessments enable staff to identify student support needs, and support is provided at unit level as well as through study skills provision. A student support section is also featured on the virtual learning environment and study guides are available. Students are provided with tutorials, and academic skills workshops are planned for the 2017-18 academic year. Student progress is monitored by the Teaching and Learning Committee against identified teaching and learning objectives, which further underpin the quality monitoring of the student learning experience.

9 The Institute has in place effective mechanisms for ensuring that the student voice continues to inform the management of teaching and learning. The Student President acts as a key conduit of information for the Institute's management. The Student President is available at set times of day to meet with students and to discuss their concerns or queries, and raise these at the appropriate committees or directly with senior managers. Student surveys are also considered at the Course Committee meetings and by the Learning and Quality Committee to identify areas for improvement in the delivery and support of teaching and learning.

10 Online learning mechanisms are being kept under review and the Institute is working to take forward access to University online resources through the creation of student accounts as part of the new partnerships process. Concerns noted in student feedback on the quality and availability of learning resources have informed current in-house resource provision, and students confirmed that the Institute provides all essential materials to enable students to complete their assessments, both online and through the library.

11 The Institute's Admissions Policy and Selections Procedure is available in the Academic Registry section of the Institute's website, and is underpinned by other College policies to ensure fair and transparent admissions systems. As students are no longer being admitted to LMU courses, the College is currently focused on only recruiting students to EUCB programmes. The procedure has been designed to reflect LMU protocols, but staff are confident that it also serves the needs of EUCB programmes. The EUCB programme MBA and Postgraduate Diploma Handbooks include information on admissions in the contents list, but the content was found to be missing. The required minimum level of

English at entry, GCSE English Grade C or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) 5.5, is clearly stated in LMU course handbooks, but not in those for EUCB programmes. All applicants have a face-to-face admissions interview, where standard forms are used to ensure equity. Where possible the interview is with a member of academic staff. All staff involved with admissions receive appropriate training as part of the College CPD processes. The team noted that interview records contain little evaluative evidence and do not require the interviewer to state their assessment of the applicant's commitment to study or give full reasons for their interview decision. English language proficiency testing is undertaken for students without evidence of level 2 qualifications, though some concerns were expressed by students as to the level of language skills of some students at the start of the programme. Senior managers recognise the issues and are strengthening the diagnostic testing processes, alongside offering appropriate support for mature students who have spent a long time out of an educational environment.

12 The Institute's Quality Manual provides a systematic overview of quality assurance processes, outlines the institution's responsibilities and describes the review as a continuous enhancement process. Staff regularly discuss quality and enhancement across teaching and assessment as part of the Institute's programme of CPD. The Learning and Teaching Strategy provides a framework for the ongoing monitoring of standards, including the monitoring of teaching practice through formal class observations. Academic Board receives quarterly reports and maintains institutional overview. Annual monitoring reports produced each October support a systematic review of provision and identify areas for improvement. The AMR for 2016-17 was not available to the team at the time of the visit as the Institute had not received formal notification of final assessment outcomes from LMU.

13 Student feedback on the quality of course provision obtained through anonymous termly course evaluation questionnaires inform enhancement. Feedback is summarised along with action points identified by Programme Leaders, and reviewed by the Learning and Quality Committee and Academic Board. Overall student satisfaction rates with provision are good, and the Institute has taken forward a number of identified action points including improvement of resource materials, Students representatives are invited to meet with senior managers every three months, and the Principal operates an open-door policy.

14 Regular meetings of staff, together with formal meetings of academic committees, identify potential areas of enhancement. Outcomes, along with proposals for new programmes, are discussed by the Learning and Quality Committee and Academic Board. Formal lesson observations identify areas of good practice, which are disseminated during staff meetings and as part of staff development. The Annual Monitoring Report contains agreed actions to enhance the provision, and key actions are then considered by Council for inclusion in the Strategic Plan.

15 The Institute has been in a period of transition over the last three years, with programmes being taught out including Pearson Higher National Diplomas, University of Staffordshire undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and LMU provision. All Staffordshire University provision was completed in 2015-16. Of the five students on the EUCB BA Business Management top-up degree, four successfully completed in 2015-16. The only students to complete in 2016-17 were those on the LMU BA (Hons) Business Administration top-up degree, with 100 of the 138 enrolled having completed the course, 55 having obtained their qualification and 20 students continuing to work towards completion, with 20 students having withdrawn. Retention rates for the BA (Hons) Business Administration where 107 students enrolled, and the BSc (Hons) Business Information Technology where seven students started the course, are 81 per cent and 71 per cent respectively. Student data is used in module and annual monitoring reports and to inform improvements in the delivery and support of teaching and learning.

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

16 The Institute's current policies, processes and programmes are intrinsically based on and mapped to the Quality Code. A comprehensive five-year Strategic Plan, containing a number of key strategic priorities, has been produced and made available on the website. Mapping to the Quality Code of the planned validated programmes with new partners is currently at a preliminary stage within the College. Since September 2016 the Institute has passed ISO 9001 and ISO 27001 approval and currently holds the Investors in People (IIP) award. The Institute's Council, which includes external members with significant experience of Higher Education and the commercial sector, provides an external reference point for strategic developments. The Industry and Business Advisory Board provides the Institute with advice and guidance by experienced external advisors drawn from a range of industrial and academic backgrounds.

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

17 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.

18 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Mike Coulson, Reviewer, and Mrs Mandy Hobart, Coordinator, on 17 October 2017.

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